

HERALD SERMONS

Second Series

BY

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"THE LIFE BEYOND," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE general good will with which the first series of these sermons was welcomed has prompted my publishers to request me to prepare a second volume.

I have received letters from nearly every quarter of the globe referring to the subjects treated, and am impelled to say that they have made me very happy.

It is true that some of these letters have been severely critical, and to these I have given very careful attention. I do not pretend to be infallible, and it does me no harm to be reminded of the fact whenever, in any man's judgment, it seems necessary to perform that service. He who believes very little is not likely to commend one who believes a good deal. Those who are sure of noth-

ing do not like my work, because I speak as one who is sure of many things. I have no grievance, however, for my critics have as good a right to their negations as I have to my affirmations.

I am in daily receipt of other letters which have given me great comfort. They show that men and women are thinking seriously on serious subjects; that there is a general desire to know the truth with regard to religion; that there is a hunger in the human heart, which can only be satisfied by a reasonable faith; and that, if there is any certainty of a future life, or even any good ground for hope that there is one, they want to know it.

The days of dogmatic theology are numbered; the merely speculative is giving way to the practical. The people are eager to discover corner-stones on which to build securely, and to build not for to-day only, but for to-morrow and the day after.

It is a good world in which we live, and we ought to be very happy while we are in it. Religion, since it tells us how to be happy, has become one of the necessities of life; and if we peer through our tears into the future, and wonder

what the dear ones are doing who have sighed their good-night, can our dreams do us harm? If Christ could say to the thief on the cross, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," is there not a Paradise for us also?

I have no fitting words in which to thank my audience for the generous attention with which they have listened to me, or for the encouragement which they have furnished me. I can only say that, as the summers and winters come and go, bringing with them an enlarged experience, my faith increases and my doubts diminish. If I can be the means of changing despair into hope in any one's life, or of convincing any one that after every storm there is a bow in the sky, or of persuading any one that death is only an incident in the soul's career, I shall be repaid a thousandfold for my labors.

G. H. H.

HERALD SERMONS.

THE FIELD AND THE MAN.

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields.”—John iv. 35.

THERE is a curious and instructive resemblance between a wheat-field and a man. The field can teach us many a moral lesson to which we may profitably give heed.

First, the soil is full of dormant possibilities. Under right conditions it will yield an abundant crop, but the conditions are imperative, and we must accord with them or the crop will never be reaped. If you allow the field to do as it will,—unless it is disciplined and cultivated, unless something is given to it and something taken away from it,—it will be valueless to the end of time. Left simply to itself, you will find it in the autumn just what it was in the spring.

This is strictly true of a man also. He too is full of possibilities, and they are all dormant. Give him the right environment, put into him a noble impulse and a holy aspiration, give him the training which will suppress certain tendencies and substitute others, the education which will enable him to see his best self, the very sight of which will render him ambitious to reach it, and you will produce a manhood which will render him little lower than the angels. On the other hand, let him lie fallow, or let him follow the lead of his impulses and caprices, his appetites and passions, and in middle life you will have a ruin, wasted years, and no achievement worthy the notice of either earth or heaven.

It is perfectly natural for the field to grow weeds; it would seem that it prefers weeds to grain; and, though this fact is puzzling, every tiller of the soil must face it. Weeds require less nourishment than grain, and they need no care or attention. Only let the field alone and the weeds will flourish abundantly.

It is equally curious that evil habits need no cultivation. They appear to come by a kind of spontaneous generation. If a man simply lets

himself alone, to go where the uppermost impulse may lead him, he very seldom takes the road to heaven, but, on the other hand, is apt to sink even in his own estimation. Moral weeds flourish with very little sunshine and multiply themselves with surprising rapidity.

In the second place, the field must be plowed, harrowed, and sowed with seed. There are forces—very productive forces—under the sod which can find their way to the surface only after the plow has torn the sod to pieces. It seems a ruthless kind of work to do, to run that plowshare down deep into the soil, and while it is being done the loam may groan with pain and wonder why such implacable intrusion should be thought necessary. But we, who have some information on the subject, know that the plow is the loam's best friend as well as the best friend of the farmer. The most valuable and the richest elements of the soil are down where only the plowshare can reach them. It does reach them and, in spite of the apparent roughness, it does bring a blessing to the field, for "No plow, no crop," is the motto of nature.

The same is true of man. The noblest elements of character are deep down in the soul. They can

never be brought to the surface and can never obtain control of the man's life until God's plow is driven as far as the share will go. When the depths have been brought up where the sun and dew can reach them, and when the man has been so torn by the harrow of experience that he becomes conscious of his manifest destiny and of the achievements which are possible, then the real spiritual life begins.

If you ask why a man should be plowed up in order that he may bring forth something worthy of himself, I can only answer with perfect frankness that I do not know. It is one of the strangest problems in the universe, and I doubt if we shall reach a solution until we stand on the farther shore and look back. The fact, however, is not to be denied in the case of the man any more than in the case of the field.

God's plow has a close relation to spiritual excellence. The noblest souls that walk the earth have suffered. Greatness cannot be attained without trial and struggle, any more than wheat will grow in an unplowed field. There is more power for good in a life of hard work than in a life of luxury, and there is more of the higher kind of

happiness in the years which so rudely tossed us about that we were compelled to cry to heaven for help than in the years when we had all we desired and were satisfied with the earth.

It is the carefully tilled soil that is covered with rich grain, and it is the disciplined soul that produces a true manhood and womanhood. The inexorable law is that your own way shall prove itself the worst way, and that God's way, which is sometimes plentifully sprinkled with disappointments, is after all and in the long run the best way.

True religion, therefore, consists in recognizing these facts and in seeing the purpose which God has in forcing upon you a varied experience. The Christ spirit is a spirit of resignation and cheerful submission to the higher and the wiser will. It is a hard lesson to learn, but heaven is ahead of us, and when we get there we shall be glad to have learned it.

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF LIFE.

“Serve the Lord with gladness : come before His presence with singing.”—Ps. c. 2.

OUR environment is one of exceeding beauty, but it is a matter of temperament and disposition whether we appreciate and enjoy it or not. The eyes of the body may be so defective that the sight is dim, and the eyes of the soul can be affected in the same way. If I had the power, therefore, and wanted to make a man happier in his surroundings, I should not change the surroundings, but rather the man. Nobody gets out of his life half as much as God has put into it. Our egotism will not allow us to blame ourselves for this, and so we find a wretched kind of relief in blaming the Almighty. We wonder why He does not arrange matters differently, and at the same time the angels are wondering why we do not see things differently. There is no sunset for one whose eyes are closed,

and there is no joy for one who believes himself to be badly treated. There never yet was an environment so perfect that a man could not find fault with it if he had a bitter soul, nor an environment so full of hardship that a man could not find some comfort in it if he was willing to look and know where to look.

The chief mission of religion, as I understand it, is, first, to change a man's attitude toward events by the necromancy of faith in God's love and wisdom, and, second, to so inform him that he will know how to use his life to the best advantage. That is what is meant by the new birth, and in very truth the general outlook becomes so different from anything before experienced that no greater change could be made if he were to be literally born again.

It is possible to think of the good things and lay the others aside, to dwell on what makes for happiness and ignore all else; but our human nature finds it difficult to do this, because the habit of doing just the contrary has become fixed.

The catalogue of things to be grateful for is very large. What a pleasure, for instance, it is to be alive, and what a beautiful mystery life is! To

think, to feel, to aspire, to reach out with speculative daring toward the stars, to dream of other worlds like this, to take a still loftier flight and explore that far-away country which we call heaven—how marvelous a creature is man, what a perfect piece of machinery he is if regarded from the standpoint of materialism even, and how much more marvelous when you recognize that interior something which is independent of the mere machine and will live a better and broader life without it after the airy nothing which we call death has done its little all!

And then, what a world this body-and-soul creature has for a residence! Can even ecstasy conceive anything more beautiful than the physical universe? The changing seasons, unrolled day after day by unseen hands and presenting a new picture with every dawn: the springtime, when the apparently dead earth breaks forth into renewed life; the glorious summer, when the impenetrable mysteries of growth unfold themselves and blossoms change to fruit; the ruddy autumn, when the work of the year reaches its consummation, and when laden trees and vineyards and ripened harvests yield their abundance; the frosty

winter, when forests and fields fall on slumber, perhaps to dream of a better springtime to come—how awe-inspiring it all is, and with what strange emotions it fills the heart! And as we ponder, how helpless we are, how little, how like children who have scarcely mastered the simplest rudiments of knowledge, and what a vast, what an inexpressibly grand territory stretches out before us, inviting us to penetrate its mysteries and solve its problems!

But take the next step. The chief object in life is not to know, but to be, and events have been so arranged that if we use them skilfully they will each one of them become a stepping-stone to higher things. The soul of childhood is nothing but a bundle of undeveloped possibilities; the powers of an archangel are packed within that narrow space. The soul grows just as the body does—no one knows how; but, strangely enough, when the body has reached its maturity the soul is still in its adolescence, and sooner or later you face the curious fact that every man is a double, and that when one part of him is in the ripe fruit the other part is still in blossom.

Now, if what you call your religion does not

practically convince you that life can be made very beautiful as well as holy, and does not persuade you that there is joy to be found almost everywhere if you will train your eyes to look for it, then put that religion aside and go to the Christ for a new set of truths. When God has given you something, do not take what man gives you in its stead. Your creed is well enough if you leave it on the shelf, but you must keep the Sermon on the Mount within reach for constant use.

Yes, there are sighs and tears, but one may even weep with hope, and your sorrow at the setting of the sun is cheered by the promise of a better morrow. There is no experience which may not be used for your benefit if you and God engage in the task together.

THE SOUL AND THE BODY.

“Thy faith hath made thee whole.”—Matt. ix. 22.

THERE are two incidents in the life of Christ which have always puzzled me. Their significance has not been noted by the religious world, or, if noted, has been put aside as of secondary importance, whereas it seems to me they should occupy a very prominent position. They refer to our daily lives, to our attitude toward the ills to which flesh is heir, and to the possibility, under given conditions, of maintaining that physical health on which our happiness so much depends.

A woman touched the hem of His garment, believing that thereby she should be healed. He who saw all things saw her heart, and He told her that it was not the touch of His garment, but her own faith, that had acted as a remedial agency. The touch was only the symbol of her faith, but the faith itself had chased the disease out of her system. It was not He who had worked what we

are apt to call a miracle, for she had in herself a miracle-working power.

That there is a law underlying this incident must be apparent to all, but that law has very seldom been recognized and still less seldom put to a practical use. That it may be possible to overcome disease by a thought instead of a drug, and that love of God and confidence in Him have much to do with keeping us whole, or, to use the old English equivalent, hale (as in the phrase "hale and hearty"), is one of the doctrines of Christianity which have been persistently ignored.

But there is something more. A centurion, who also had faith, desired to have his servant healed, and sought the great Physician for that purpose. Christ said to him, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," and the servant was healed in the self-same hour. Our surprise at that statement knows no bounds. The servant, who may or may not have had faith, was made whole through the agency of a man whose faith was undoubted. A second time it is intimated that faith is the miracle-worker, but in this latter case the man who had the faith and who was interested in the patient actually cured the man who perhaps had no faith at all.

The world has been thinking of this subject for a long time. We put a coin into the hand of one who asks such a favor and are not surprised to see his groans of despair give way to smiles of happiness; but if Christ be true, we can put a thought into a sick man's heart as easily as we can put a coin into his palm, and the thought will change the whole current of the recipient's feelings, just as the receipt of the coin did. In other words, it is a literal fact that we can minister to a mind diseased and that a mind diseased can minister to itself.

We cannot restrain our astonishment at such an assertion, even though it fall from the lips of Christ Himself. For nearly twenty centuries that statement has been in the air, as electricity has been in the clouds. We have at last caught the lightning and harnessed it to our comforts and conveniences, but the fact that faith can make us whole still wings its flight far above our heads without being captured for use in our daily lives.

At long intervals we become startled at the recital of some cure in answer to prayer, but this practical world receives it with a shrug, and it is quickly sent into the darkness of the background. A physical law is perfectly apprehended, but a

spiritual law is ignored as inefficient. We know what drugs will do, but we do not yet know what ideas will do. Scientists tell us that a diseased body will twist the soul out of shape, and we nod assent, for the experiment has been tried again and again. But if any one asserts that the converse is true and that a healthy soul will go far toward making a healthy body, skeptics tell us that we are wandering about in a region of mystery. Perhaps so, but truth is that it ought not to be a region of mystery, and that sometime, when the race is older, it will not be.

I can see no reason for accepting one portion of Christianity which happens to suit my fancy, and rejecting another portion which runs counter to my prejudices. If Christ was mistaken in one thing He may be in another. So when He says, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," I stoutly assert that faith is the true basis of health. God did not make a diseased world, and if it is diseased it must be contrary to His wishes. A man should be hale to the hour when he starts for heaven, and then fall as the ripe apple drops from the tree. That is the order of nature, without doubt.

When the heart is right, when we love God and

have confidence in Him, the soul comes to be stronger than the body, whereas at present the body dominates the soul. The wrong sovereign has been crowned. A faithful spirit, which sees the glory of human life, recognizes its own dignity, and keeps the grandeur of eternity in view—to such a spirit the body owes allegiance.

You cannot meditate on God without feeling the delicious results in your whole physical system, and if men had the faith of the woman in the text, the tendency would be toward physical as well as spiritual health. Religion covers the whole man, his body as well as his soul, and the Christ can heal the one as He can bless the other.

WHAT WE REALLY NEED.

“Take that thine is, and go thy way.”—Matt. xx. 14.

THERE is a large number of things in the world which we can get on very well without. There is also a large number of things which we covet because we think them necessary to our happiness, but which we really do not need. Lastly, there are a few things, but only a few, which we must have in order to make our lives what God intended they should be.

A large part of our discontent comes from not having what we ourselves think we ought to have, but what Providence evidently regards as unnecessary to our development. This difference of opinion between us and the Almighty is the fruitful source of much human misery. We demand that He shall agree with us, whereas it is clearly our duty to agree with Him. Our ignorance is the standard by which we measure His wisdom, and

yet if one of our children should assume the same attitude toward us it would well-nigh break our hearts. Instead of accepting what comes and making the best of it, we constantly pray that God will do what we want to have done, and because the prayer is not answered we not only grow spiritually cold, but open the door to a great many doubts, which literally freeze the nobler part of our natures.

If a tyro should come into our warehouse or manufactory and ask us to conduct our business on the basis of his inexperience rather than on that of our hard-earned knowledge, the difference between us and God is that we should indignantly eject him, whereas God pities us for doing precisely the same thing. The forbearance of the Almighty with our wilfulness and conceit, His everlasting patience with us under such circumstances, is one of the most wonderful facts of the universe, and one of the most thrilling and startling.

Human life may be reverently compared to an opera. God is the author of the music, and He gives each person the part he is to take. Religion is simply the drill-master, who constantly

enjoins upon us the necessity of strictly following the score, and constantly insists that we cannot make changes in the score without injuring the unity of the production. Of course I do not refer to the formulas of religion, but to its essence. The formulas are simply certain men's opinions of religion, or possibly their prejudices, while its essence is contained in the statement that the author of the opera knows better how it should be rendered than you do.

But suppose each singer should insist on singing in accordance with his own interpretation, and suppose further that you had the impression that these various and discordant interpretations represented the author and not the personal peculiarities of the singers, what a strange piece of music it would all be, and what a queer idea of the author the listener would have! Well, that is precisely what we are doing all the time in matters of religion, and that is why we make of it such a jumble and jangle. Sing the music as it was written, and it is exquisitely beautiful and uplifting; but let it be sung as each individual thinks it ought to be sung, and the discord becomes deafening and disheartening.

Our real wants are very few, though we are apt to think them very many. We can be happy—this is true of at least nine tenths of the world—with what we have if we know how to make the most of it and the best of it. It takes but little to make the soul contented if we do not try to make our avarice and our envy contented also. When we begin to count the things we ought to have we begin to be miserable, but when we begin to be thankful for the things we really possess we begin to be happy. You do not need wealth, nor yet fame, nor a palace, nor a park. If you have a shelter and have made that shelter a home, if you have dear ones whose love is trustful and confiding, whose lives are woven into yours by threads of steel, pray what more is there to ask for? If you are not happy then, you can hardly expect to be happy in heaven, for heaven has only love to offer.

This happiness is the product of faith, and of faith alone. A love which death can destroy is simply anticipated anguish. Souls that are knitted together may be torn apart, but their love for each other is as indestructible and as lasting as the throne of God.

The man who has the moral courage to recognize how few things he really needs, who disdains the world's pomp and show, who refuses to listen to the clamorings of wealth and its charlatan pretensions, has reached that spiritual eminence on which he finds himself in the company of the Christ and of the noblest men and women who have dropped the benediction of holy lives on a weary, a hungry, and a troubled world. With health, with honest work, with the love of those whose arms are about your neck and whose affection will never fail you, with a simple faith that is like sunshine and dew—with these things you are one of the most privileged men on the earth, and even the New Jerusalem will have but few additional joys to offer.

OUR ANGELS.

“Angels came and ministered unto Him.”—Matt. iv. 11.

IT is a glad surprise to the careful student of the older and the newer Scriptures that the beings whom we call angels occupy so prominent a position in the Father's dealings with His children on the earth. And it is not the least curious fact in the history of our modern religious life that the mission of these angels should be either ignored or practically discredited. We have not been willing to admit that God uses any secondary agencies in the accomplishment of His purposes.

As a consequence we suffer spiritual loss, for there is great comfort to be had in the belief that a throng of invisible beings are nigh at hand in our time of trouble, pitying us in our distress, and lending such aid as lies in their power. How many of our burdens are lightened by their succoring strength, how frequently we are enabled to resist

temptation by their power added to our own, how often holy suggestions come from them, which we attribute to our own minds or hearts, no one can tell. But that they do come from heaven to earth, and that our daily lives are blessed by their presence, no one who accepts the record of Christ's ministry as veritable history can possibly doubt.

Their doings run through the pages of the Old Testament like a golden thread in a costly fabric. The dark places in the life of the ancient Hebrews are illumined by them, and every prophet held communion with them and received from them the mandates of the Most High. Daniel, when speaking of the strait he was in, said, "Behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. . . . And he informed me, and talked with me;" and his experience is so multiplied by others of a like nature that we are almost startled by their constant recurrence. They shine like stars on a winter night; and to them the Hebrews were indebted for their courage and their national glory.

The birth of Christ was announced by an angel; the flight into Egypt with the Child was commanded by an angel; when the temptation of Christ was ended He was ministered unto by

angels ; when the tearful women stood at the tomb it was an angel, " whose raiment was white as snow," who proclaimed the resurrection ; and when the mob followed the Lord, and the disciples talked of resistance by force, He rebuked them, declaring that if needful He could call on " more than twelve legions of angels."

I adduce only a few out of many instances, but they are sufficient to establish and emphasize the fact that we are seen, though we do not see, and that heaven holds the earth in its arms as a mother her babe. No distance forms a barrier either to our longing or to a response to it. We may not feel the hand that is placed in ours, but it is there ; we do not hear with the hearing of the ear, but with the hearing of the heart ; we do not see these guardian spirits with the eye, but with our inner consciousness we are sure that they are close by.

What a glorious realm of thought we are exploring ! What a glorious realm of fact is revealed to us ! The poor soul that is being driven along the downward path by the fury of his passions is accompanied at every step by God's messengers, —the messengers of His pity and His love,—and

with their supremest efforts they try to bar his way to further wretchedness. The lonely heart that has been chilled by frosty misfortune, and falls upon a desperate mood that regards even crime with indifference, is surrounded by invisible agents, who are doing all that heaven itself can suggest to make the way smoother and the sky brighter. And the mourning soul, sitting in the shadow of a great bereavement, looking upward with tear-dimmed eyes—is no one near to whisper consolation? is God unmindful or powerless to assuage this grief? The angels, who represent God's sympathy, are in that darkened room, and the peace that comes to the broken heart comes from above.

We have here a practical fact, but we have made too little use of it. The wonder is that we have neglected it so long, for it is one of the most precious truths to be found within the whole range of God's providence. Not alone, never alone, but always in the companionship of ministering spirits, enjoined by the Father to do us good service if we will allow them to do so.

And who are these heavenly beings? Why not those who have been bound to us for many years

and who love us now more than ever? Shall they who have been so dear, but who were summoned to the other land, be sent far away, while strangers do His bidding for our behoof? Our guardians are those who have been closest to our hearts, I believe, and they are always ready to come at our call. They hover about us, guide our wandering footsteps, avert impending danger, do what they may to encourage and cheer, and after the night-fall, when the morning comes, they will be the first to greet us and welcome us to that home where partings shall be forever unknown.

THE SOUL AND THE COMPASS.

“ So God created man in His own image ; . . . male and female created He them.”—Gen. i. 27.

THAT is a very remarkable and a very odd statement. It is the strongest assertion of the dignity of human nature that could be put into language. It is a declaration also that our ability to achieve is without limit, and it is a curious commentary on the injunction to “ be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” If my first text represents the fact of the case, my second need not be regarded as containing any exaggeration, for it simply expresses what ought to be rightfully and fairly expected.

If we are made in the image of God, and if He did breathe into us the breath of His own life, then we should not only feel chagrin at the little we have accomplished, but be encouraged to begin another day's work with the hope of better results.

What enthusiasm comes from the thought that some part of God is in literal fact a part of us, and that some part of us is a part of God! God, therefore, is to a certain extent resident in every soul, and every soul has impulses which are godlike.

Why does the magnetic needle point to the north? Because that omnipotent and omnipresent something which no man can accurately define has been sent through its substance. As a mere bar of steel it cares no more for the north than for the east; but when it has felt the magic current it becomes a steel bar plus a mysterious endowment, and that precious endowment so changes its character that thereafter it turns restlessly on its pivot until it points to the north, and then it becomes quiet.

It may be deflected, however, by some powerful influence, and in that case it is impossible to depend on it until the foreign and intrusive substance is removed.

It is precisely so with the soul. Naturally it turns to God, like the needle to the pole, for the simple reason that the part of God within us seeks its source; but unworthy influences, like selfishness and avarice, can deflect that soul from its true

direction and so smother it that nearly all traces of God are lost.

What we need, then, is to get back to a full consciousness that God and we are closely related to each other. Therein lies the secret of religion. Call it the new birth or what you will, it is nothing more nor less than clearing away the underbrush and worldly rubbish and giving the sun a chance to shine on our roots.

Having been made in the image of God, it does not seem strange that Adam and Eve received constant communications from heaven. It would have been very strange indeed if it had been otherwise. Why should not the angels have been glad to talk with beings in whom a part of their God was resident? And as for us in these later days, the only reason why we cannot get into closer association with the other world, and the only reason why this world seems at times so dull and unprofitable, is that we have covered up the consciousness of His presence and love, and are under the fascinating but destructive spell of things earthly and temporary.

Shut yourself away from the world for a while, think seriously of the soul and its needs, uncover

yourself to yourself, find out who and what you are and who and what you are to be in the future—do this with courage and skill, and you will soon see that the present life is of less worth than you thought it, and that the other life is more real than you have ever dreamed.

We must return to a recognition of our princely dignity as members of the great household of God. Our religion, when viewed from this standpoint, becomes the most necessary and the most encouraging, as it is the most divine, thing in the world. It is, as the etymology of the word indicates, that wonderful something which binds God and the soul together in eternal unity.

Occupying such a vantage-ground, our human life is illuminated as when the sun rises over the hilltops on a misty morning. The heat that comes from the magnificent and beneficent orb of day lifts all mists from the landscape and develops its beauty and grandeur. In like manner, doubts, fears, perplexities, worries, are dissipated by the actual presence of God in the soul, and you become calm, restful, confiding, looking upon the experiences of this present time as needful to a proper preparation for the time to come.

The nobler part of you is in the ascendant, makes you master of events, and the whole complexion of life is changed. Do but think of this matter seriously and you will acquire new strength. Take away from the compass all disturbing substances, let the needle obey its natural impulse, and it will swing to the north. Under like conditions the soul will swing toward heaven.

THE BURDENS WE BEAR.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.”—
Matt. xi. 28.

THE prevalence of sorrow in this lower world is somewhat appalling to a sympathetic nature. It is to be found in a thousand shapes and in every nook and corner. The clouds have hardly held more raindrops than the tears which have fallen from human eyes. Hearts are heavy everywhere, and if we ask why this should be, the answer must be sought with patience and perseverance.

There are other experiences, besides those connected with the vacant chair, which are very hard to bear. It is even safe to say that death has rivals in the production of suffering, and that the loss of loved ones does not rank first among the incidents that have broken our hearts. When one has passed beyond the mysterious limit of life and disappeared from our sight, though not from our memory and affection, it may be that his fortune

is better than ours. He has taken the path which leads to the land where sorrows are unknown, while we remain to bear alone the burdens which he aforetime shared with us. It is possible to be glad—with a painful kind of gladness—that for him has come the end of physical agony and the sleep which follows life's fitful fever.

There are other sorrows which make us old before our time—the endless trials and disappointments which fill us with anxiety and are so discouraging that we often wonder what there is in life, that we should cling to it so tenaciously. We feel like men in a boat rowing against the current, who make no headway, however eagerly they may bend to the oars.

It is concerning this class of sorrows that we need counsel and an encouraging word if one can be found. For example, this man began life with high hopes, and as the years went by these hopes withered and fell, one by one, until nothing is left except the dull monotony of drudgery. The bells, which merrily chimed in other days, have been tolling for many a year now. Another man dreamed of a competency for himself and his dear ones, but the profits of business failed him. He

would give his family everything, but what he calls fate is against him, and he can give them nothing. In another home some large-hearted boy has gone wrong, and, like an ocean steamer under full headway in a fog, may reach the wrecking rocks at any moment. In still another home the daughter, with misplaced affection, is about to take the risks of an unfortunate marriage, the results of which she cannot be made to see, though others see them only too plainly.

These are among the most serious events of life, and they are happening somewhere every day. There are few homes in which some shadow of this kind has not fallen, and they show us that death is not the only thing, nor yet the chief thing, to be dreaded.

Why we must suffer in this way I cannot tell. I simply repeat the lines:

“ God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.”

But it is certain that He never sent a cloud that had not a silver lining, and in His all-including providence no event can occur which has not attached to it some measure of hope and cheer.

If this life were all, then, it must be confessed, our lot would be a hard one. A sadder or more desperate plight than man would find himself in, were another life denied, cannot well be conceived. It may seem to be a grim sort of argument, but it is nevertheless fair to say that our sufferings in this world make the necessity of another world absolutely imperative. Looked at from the lowest standpoint, this life, with its inexorable griefs, its bent shoulders, its bleeding hearts and eyes be-dimmed, demands a future in the name of ordinary justice. Looked at from the highest standpoint, this life is a period of discipline to prepare us for a nobler state of existence. But what should be said—except that the whole universe is a delusion and a sham—if, having toilsomely prepared ourselves, we be told that there is nothing to be prepared for? That argument for immortality is like the cry of innocence condemned to death by a capricious tyrant, and demanding that the sentence shall be set aside. It is irrefutable, and can no more be broken than a piece of chilled steel.

The woes, the groans, the sorrowing homes of this old earth—aye, the lives that have been wrecked by overcoming temptation, and the very

crimes that have been committed—cry out for immortality, in which wrongs may be righted and peace and rest will follow hardship and struggle.

You may find good cheer in this advice: to do the best your circumstances allow, to bear what comes as bravely as you can, to keep your heart pure and your hands clean, no matter what betides, and to do all this in the strength of that wonderful Being who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Your relations to God are not to be shaken by the fact that you do not understand His providence. On the contrary, when the path is rugged and the night is dark—and very dark indeed it is sometimes—cling all the closer to your faith, for it is the only thing under the stars that can give you help. There are bright days ahead,—if not here, then there,—and once on the other side, we shall see plainly what is now hidden.

TWO AND TWO MAKE FOUR.

“ And I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”
—Rev. ii. 23.

WHEN you get down to the foundations of religion you find that they consist of that sturdy common sense which always prevails in the end. Men have a great many theories about what they call the judgment-day, but it is patent to every careful observer that each day of life is a judgment-day, and that at every sundown God announces to your soul the penalty or reward which naturally follows your deeds, the penalty which you must inevitably suffer, or the reward you will certainly enjoy, on their account.

A great many people are under the impression that they can wipe out the bad which they have done defiantly by doing something good as an irksome duty. The laws of the universe, however, will have to be considerably changed before that

will become possible. And a great many men labor under the strange hallucination that they can lead utterly selfish lives, giving full swing to their passions and their avarice, indulging in dishonest practices to the top of their bent, and then, when nearing the end of their tether, can repent,—but keep all their ill-gotten gains,—and so escape the consequences of their threescore misspent years.

I should have very little respect for a man who supposed that he could hoodwink the eternal laws in that way. There is no sleight of hand possible with the verities of God, and the sternest of all facts is that you cannot be made good by a miracle and cannot be happy unless you have earned the right to happiness by rectitude of life. Religion tells you in trumpet tones that as you sow so you will reap, and that if you plant thistles in the spring you cannot hope to gather corn in October. The doctrine of Christ is the most uncompromising thing in the world; there is neither favoritism nor injustice in it; and that is only another way of saying that if you have furnished your house with filth you need not hope that cleanliness will be satisfied to abide in it until it has been thoroughly put in order.

If a man is told to go north, and chooses to go south instead, every step he takes leads him out of the way. He may say, if he pleases, that he likes what he finds in the south better than what is promised in the north. He may even deny that there is any north, and so give himself up to the pleasures of the tropics. Be sure that the Almighty made no mistake when He declared that no one can be contented with his back to the north and his face to the south. Sooner or later, either in this life or in the life to come, he must reach that point of vision from which he will see the truth as God has stated it. Then, when he comes to himself, discovers that he has wasted his years and crippled his soul, and concludes to radically change his action, what has religion to say to him? It approves of his repentance, because he is thereby at a standstill in the work of injuring himself. It tells him that the moment he comes over to the side of the Almighty the Almighty will make it as easy as possible—that is the awful phrase, “as easy as possible”—for him to retrace his steps. But does religion tell him that no consequences will follow those long years of selfish indulgence? that some miracle will take him in its arms and

put him bodily and spiritually back to the point in his journey from which he began to go wrong? Not at all.

We can all see that the wrecked body is beyond repair, and that, though the better course of life may save the remnants of his broken health, it cannot and will not give him the vigor and strength he has thrown away. The same truth holds good of the soul, the only difference being that, while the body is used only for a limited time and has therefore very slender recuperative power, the soul, being without limitations, has very large power of recovery and remedy. The body may die from injuries inflicted, in spite of repentance, but the soul by vigorous effort may recover its lost ground. You cannot evade the fact, however, that the man who has traveled south when commanded to go north will be compelled by the very laws of his nature to cover all the miles from the point at which he diverged.

Religion was by no means organized for the accommodation of evil-doers. The love of God is infinite, and so is His pity. His patience and goodness consist in the fact that He has opened a way for your return, however far you may have

wandered. To assert that you can insult His laws during a whole lifetime, and then, when you have no more time or opportunity to continue the insult, can suddenly become a good man, fitted to enjoy the glories of heaven, is repugnant to our knowledge of the way in which the laws of the universe act in every-day life.

I say, therefore, that religion is not a sentimental mystery, which glosses over your wicked life when you know perfectly well that it ought not to be glossed over. On the other hand, it is the warning voice of a Father, who tells you that you must sow corn if you would reap corn, and that if you do not sow corn you will have no corn to eat. The religion of Christ states that in morals, as in mathematics, two and two make four, and that if you think otherwise no power in heaven or earth can make your books balance.

HOUSE-BUILDING AND CHARACTER-BUILDING.

“ A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”—2 Tim. ii. 15.

WHEN a child comes into this world he comes without any character at all. He is simply a bundle of latent energies, a fagot of possibilities, or a piece of white paper on which, as time goes on, he will write the history of a soul and demonstrate its success or failure. The science of heredity teaches us that he may have strong tendencies to either good or evil; but when his reason puts the crown on his head, as Napoleon did at Notre Dame, he is in full command of himself and can settle his destiny beyond a peradventure. If he is long-sighted he will see that he must not become the creature of circumstance, but must bend circumstance to the accomplishment of a high, noble, and divine purpose.

Religion comes to his aid and tells him, just as

an old man would tell a young man, that one course of life will in the long run, however enticing it may be at the beginning, produce misery both of body and mind, and that another course of life will in the long run produce satisfaction and happiness. That is the chief function of religion, and that is the only kind of religion which can rightfully claim his attention. It is a man's best friend, because it teaches him to seek his best good. Religion is the science which tells us how to produce the highest results, and as such no man can afford to be indifferent to it.

If you traverse the sea you need a compass and a chart. If you travel through a strange country you want a guide-book. If you hope to attain eminence in any profession and to reap profit from it you must make yourself familiar with the fundamental principles of that profession. For a precisely similar reason and with precisely the same end in view, you must know what you want to do and how it can be most easily done when you stand on the threshold of your career and look forward with hope. You want religion, but it must be a religion of common sense.

House-building and character-building are gov-

erned by the same principles. In both cases the task is difficult—that is, if you are to have a house that will be convenient or a character that will prove satisfactory. If you slight your house you will never have what you want, and if you slight your character you will never become what you hope to be. There are pretty stern laws underlying both structures, and it is better to take pains while building than to have pain after the work is completed.

There is, however, one serious difference between these two undertakings. If you build a house and don't like it, you can get rid of it, though perhaps at a loss; but if you build a character and don't like it, you will find yourself in very serious trouble. Your character is really yourself, and if you don't like yourself, when the time for careful examination arrives you will be compelled, either in this or in some other world, to take the whole thing down, even to the foundation-stones, and build all over again.

The text is rather startling in its intimations. Think of yourself as standing on some lofty vantage-ground of the future life, with eyes brightened by new powers of vision and a mind that sees

critically and judges impartially ; think of yourself looking back on what you have done in this life with the consciousness that you have been a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. God gave you the plan, and you built in accordance with it. You were wise enough to know that you knew very little, and so took your corner-stones from the divine quarry of the Sermon on the Mount. You were no bungler, but a master workman, and though your house is not perfect, still, it shows honest endeavor and the ambition to do the best you could. That is my idea of heaven, for heaven is within, not without. When a man has such feelings in his heart he is already in heaven, whether he lives in this world or in any other world. Such a man is accepted of God, whatever his color or his social position or his creed.

Then, again, think of yourself awaking from the sleep of death, and, after becoming used to the new environment, looking back on your past life and recognizing the awful fact that it is a direful failure. The winds have beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. You see what God did for you and how wretchedly you undid yourself. What regrets must torment you,

and how you will hate yourself! A life deliberately spoiled and despoiled, wasted, wrecked, and all because you had no plan, or, having one, built in defiance of it! That is my idea of hell, and I can conceive of no agony more poignant than for such a man to look from the face of a pitying Father to his own desperate failure amid the opportunities of his mortal life. Hell is simply the displeasure of God mingled with your condemnation of yourself. Brimstone fires are nothing in comparison with the flames of remorse and self-reproach.

Build your character just as you would build a home. Solid masonry and sound timber! The labor done by a workman that needeth not to be ashamed! God and Christ and the angels will then come and take up their abode with you, and when you step out of the earthly tabernacle you will be welcomed by the glorious company above.

THOU SHALT NOT WORRY.

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”—Matt. vi. 34.

CHRIST was, above all things, practical. That was His marked characteristic, the one which especially endears Him to mankind, for it establishes between us and Him the personal relations of teacher and pupil. I like to think of Him as a friend who has all the resources of wisdom at command, who is for some reason interested in my welfare, who has furnished me with certain truths which I could hardly discover for myself and in which I can place as much confidence as the mariner on tempestuous seas does in the compass that guides him through storm and darkness.

Some of the advice He has given is difficult to understand and more difficult to follow. The text is an illustration of this. If He tells us that the angels of God are never beyond hearing distance when we are in need of help, or if He declares

that there is another life for which these few years are simply a preparation, and that we must so act to-day that we shall have no regrets in the great to-morrow, we can catch a glimpse of His meaning, for there is a mysterious something in our souls which corroborates His words. But when He assures us that in our daily lives we ought to face the present moment and do the present duty, not allowing ourselves to be over-anxious about what may happen during the day to come, it is necessary to think the matter over very carefully before we can see the principle which underlies His words.

Surely He was well aware of the trials, troubles, sorrows, and uncertainties through which we pass, for they filled His own short career to the very brim. No man has ever suffered more than He did, and none has been pricked by as many thorns. And yet He calmly tells us to possess our souls in peace, not to anticipate the future, neither to worry about what may happen to-morrow; but to bear as best we may whatever burden is on our shoulders and let the morrow take care of itself. He does not speak of this as the better policy to pursue, but as an imperative duty imposed by the laws of the universe and by the God who decreed them.

What does He mean by this strange utterance? Perhaps by searching we may find out.

Worry, to begin with, is useless. It produces no good result. On the contrary, it is utterly destructive in its nature. So far from preparing you to overcome disaster, it renders you unfit to meet it. It debilitates the soul and robs you of the very strength which you pray for because you see it will be needed. To worry is to endure an agony before its time and so prolong your misery. God says, "You must suffer pain to-morrow," and you reply, "Then I will suffer it to-day also."

Do not think I am forgetful. I know that coming events cast their shadows before, that one cannot laugh up to the moment when the clock strikes and the blow falls. The imagination is winged, and it flies into the future. Love thinks of the hour of separation which cannot long be postponed, and tears tremble on the eyelids not because of what is, but of what is to be. We should be not more, but less than human if this were not so.

Suppose, however, that our faith was perfect. If our souls were in accord with the providence of God, if we really felt that a hand controls events

and that behind the hand is the heart of a Father; that what we must bear He will give us strength to bear; that if we are not masters of the situation, He is—would not such a faith quiet our restlessness, and should we not resemble the Sea of Galilee after Christ said, "Peace, be still"? The element of worry would be well-nigh eliminated, and, with the feeling that whatever is is right, we should borrow nothing from the future, but simply bear the present sorrow.

It is true religion that we need, and more of it. In our professed belief we have a God enthroned, but in our daily life we have a God dethroned. In our heart of hearts we do not have confidence in Him, but act as though there were no God at all. If we could climb to that high spiritual level, so far above our heads and well-nigh out of sight, on which Christ lived, we should be healthier in body, more vigorous in soul to meet the inevitable, more cheerful, happier, less restless, and immeasurably nobler.

It is profitable for you to so far anticipate the effect of a given cause that you prepare to meet it; but when you have done all that can be done, it is exceedingly unprofitable to so weaken yourself

by worry that the coming sorrow is doubled in weight. As much as lies in your power—and it is a quality of character which admits of great development—live in to-day. Cultivate a quiet and peaceful frame of mind. He did it and was undisturbed by threatening circumstance, and you may follow afar off. What you are doing now calls for all your strength, and if there is more to follow then the additional strength will be given. God's providence is both wide and tender, and the more you trust in it, the sweeter will be your life, the brighter will be your hope, the fairer will be your general outlook, and the nearer will heaven seem to you. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

WHY ARE WE PUNISHED?

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—Luke xv. 10.

WHAT do we mean when we say that God punishes men? The word “punishment” is in some respects the most conspicuous in the theology of the past, and it occupies a very serious prominence in the theology of the present.

When reading the sermons preached in olden days, punishment is so much more frequently met with than love that we have inherited certain ideas of God which make it rather difficult to speak of Him as our Father. The terrors of the Lord, as interpreted by the spiritual teachers of mankind, have introduced an element of fear into religion which has almost become a controlling motive, and yet every one of us knows that what we do through love is exceedingly better than what we do through fear. It is even safe to say that a re-

ligion of fear is a very low sort of religion, from which the uplifting and upholding influences which Christ brought into the world are entirely absent.

If I understand the Master, He wished us to love God in much the way in which a child loves its mother, and to have the same confidence in Him that the child has in the protecting presence of its father. That is to say, the relation between us and Him is always paternal on His side and can never be otherwise, and should be filial on our side. No matter what your spiritual condition may be, whether you are given to works of charity or deeds of darkness, He is forever the same; for in the one case He rejoices with you in your goodness, and in the other He pities you in your badness. If, like the prodigal, living on husks which the swine do eat, you thoughtfully come to the conclusion that your life is a mistake, and conclude to face the stars and walk that way, you can be absolutely sure that God has been sorry for you during every hour of dissipation, and will take you into the warm embrace of His sympathy and love when you feel the need of holier living. Men may turn from you, but God never.

And yet punishment is a frightful fact in every man's life. The world is almost sinking under its weight. Not a soul lives that does not bear some burden of that kind. There is more wailing than laughter on the planet, and regrets sharp as the sting of a hornet abundantly prove that our way is not God's way and that God's sovereignty is asserting itself. There is no happiness except in obedience, not even a scintilla, and just so long as we are wilful and selfish, so long we must take the consequences.

But what purpose does this punishment subserve? Take a familiar illustration and perhaps we shall find enlightenment. You are a parent, but your child has gone wrong. That child is bone of your bone, made in your image. You rocked its cradle and held it to your bosom. But the little one has developed evil tendencies. You cannot approve of them; on the other hand, you frown upon them. Your attitude toward the child and your attitude toward what he does are two very different things. You may punish, but not with wrath, for your eyes are filled with tears. What is your object in the punishment? Do you hate the child, and would you crush it because it

has fallen into bad ways? Is it any pleasure to you to administer the physical rebuke? No; your heart is peculiarly tender toward that boy, and yet for his own sake you must teach him that certain things must not be done. You are severe, you are relentless; but there is no other way to save him. He may think you a tyrant, and his eyes may flash with anger because you oppose his self-will, but has your love departed? Would you not make great sacrifices for him? Does not your mother-heart yearn for the love which he refuses to give? Yes; you love while you punish, and though you dare not remit any measure of the punishment, the love seems to grow more intense; love and grief are intermingled. In a word, you punish in order to reform, and the punishment is solely for the child's sake.

Is not this also true with regard to our heavenly Father? You do Him the most grievous wrong when you think of Him as a being who can under any circumstances hate you. If you are the worst sinner in the world; if justice chases you from one hiding-place to another because of your crimes; if your old friends all curse you; if your children turn their backs on you and shudder at the recol-

lection of your infamous deeds; if there is no spot on the broad earth where you can find a resting-place—still, as truly as the stars shine above you at night and the sun by day, and neither the one nor the other is paled by your guilt, so truly does God Almighty pity you with a pity that is fathomless and boundless, and so truly do the angels band together to draw you back into the paths of personal purity and rectitude.

Doubt everything else, but never doubt that you are being punished as you know you deserve to be, and you must reap the consequences of your misdeeds as you know you ought to; but if you see that you have blundered, and if your punishment leads to such serious thinking that you would make your future different from your past, you will find the everlasting arm of God underneath you, and you will hear the voices of angels singing a welcome back to your better self. Poor fellow! You have been in hell, and everybody in heaven has been sorry for you. God has never for a moment hated you, and your own hands made the hell in which you lived. Your undoing was your own doing, not His. Your soul has been dark, but your own hands drew down the window-cur-

tains and shut out the light. You have been your own executioner.

If you see all this at some critical juncture in your experience, and if you recognize the fact that you have made a losing investment of yourself, and if you determine, even at the eleventh hour, to become a man, there can be no such rejoicing on earth as there will be in heaven. God's pity will be dissipated and His approval will take its place; the dear ones who have watched your downward path will extend their hands to help you climb; and there will come into your soul such a peace and satisfaction as will dull the memory of the old and dreary days. God sorrows with the sorrowing; He pities the erring; He loves from eternity to eternity.

LOVE YOURSELF LAST.

“ He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”—Matt. x. 39.

SELFISHNESS is the cause of nine tenths of the misery in the world and of nine tenths of the other tenth.

If you carefully analyze this vice as it exhibits itself in your own life, you will see that it is closely allied to cruelty ; that is to say, you are willing to be cruel to some one in order to obtain a gratification for yourself.

Selfishness is a despicable and demoralizing form of depravity. It is the cracked tire of the wheel of progress, the broken shaft in the engine of moral improvement, a kind of spiritual earthquake, which turns everything topsy-turvy and makes harmony, brotherliness, and true religion utterly impossible.

An unselfish world has been the dream of poets and prophets for centuries. They saw the divine possibilities of human nature, the noble qualities

both intellectual and moral, with which we are endowed. They had visions of an earth that was both earth and heaven, of a race which boldly marched from the lowlands of base passion to live on the uplands, with the stars forever above it, unobscured by clouds.

The millennial energy is driving us in that direction, but we make as slow progress as a man who climbs a mountain with a heavy burden on his shoulders. The instances of self-sacrifice and patriotism and philanthropy and large charity which we see give us a glimpse of the ethereal plateau which it is our manifest destiny to attain sometime, but as yet we are racked and torn and riven and disrupted by a curious greediness for ourselves and a persistent indifference to the fate of others. We feel no personal responsibility for the guilt or misery of our neighbors. We have enough of the grace of God to hope that every one may be content and happy, but not enough to compel us to help them to attain their desire. In a word, the genuine Christ spirit is not a strong factor either in our society or in our individual lives. Christ, who busied Himself in doing good, and whose teaching may be summed up in the

injunction to think less of ourselves and more of others, is still a stranger to us, although we have known Him for nearly two thousand years. We believe more in the theology of the apostles than in the religion of the Lord.

Let us think a moment. What do we mean by selfishness? Certainly not self-love in any true sense, because selfishness is not the building up of self, but the destruction of self. Indeed, there is very little self-love in the world. The man who is in love with himself is a poor sort of creature, who must be demented. We cannot love ourselves if we have any sense, for no one knows better than we do that we are not worthy of love. Selfishness, therefore, is not pure love of self, but an ignoble passion for grasping more than our share, regardless of the rights and claims of others. It indicates a criminal indifference whether any man enjoys himself or has the means of doing so, provided all our own wants are gratified. It means that brotherhood is a myth, and that if our table is well supplied our neighbor may starve, or if we keep ourselves from the commission of crime our fellow-men need not look to us for any help to resist temptation. We hold ourselves unrespon-

sible for everything except our own personal condition.

But, you say, if we were really appreciative of the suffering about us, life would not be worth living, and we should all have broken hearts if we literally bore one another's burdens. The answer is, the sooner our hearts are broken from such a cause the better. If it would be a very hell on earth to have a keen realization of the crimes and wretchedness of mankind, then let us live in that kind of hell until we can make it a heaven.

You have no right to do anything to keep yourself from realizing the condition of others, for they and you belong to the same family ; and you have no right, in the sight of God, to eat your bread in peace if you know that some one is starving. What kind of a world are we making? Is it a God's world, a Christ's world, or a world filled with cruel demons—a world in which the chief purpose is to get everything and to give nothing? Why should we not suffer if others are suffering?

Suppose that by some magic our selfishness were eliminated and a divine and pitying love should take its place ; suppose we were filled with a holy determination to give needed protection to every

young man who now seeks in vain for the good cheer of an honest life, and to hold in our sisterly embrace every poor girl who is driven by desperation to an unholy career; would the world be any the worse?

Suppose the church should say, "We are too busy to talk about theology; we will do that when we have eternity before us; for the present we must get out the life-boats and save the tempest-tossed and shipwrecked;" what then? What then? Why, for the first time we should understand Christianity. The New Testament would become an open book and religion a blessed reality.

Lose yourself and you will find yourself. Love yourself last and the stars will shine with a brighter beam. Save some one, give some one a share of your plenty, pity the poor and oppressed, let no day pass without a kindly word or a generous deed, and angels will come and visit you, for you will be doing God's work in God's way. If you wish to go to heaven in the hereafter, you must put a bit of heaven into some forlorn life here.

A BLESSED FAITH.

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again.”—Rev. x. 8.

BEFORE the first voyage of Columbus this whole hemisphere was to the people of Spain a myth, a dream, a possible everything, but a practical nothing. It was a very agreeable subject for discussion among scholars, and they perhaps found good reasons both for believing and for disbelieving in its existence. As a theory this Western land occupied a more or less prominent position in all the universities of Europe, and a good deal of serious thought was devoted to it by the learned. But if one of the merchants of Madrid had been asked to invest his money in some commercial venture the profits of which depended upon the discovery of what are now known as the two Americas, he would have laughed at the scheme as the financial operation of a madman.

When, however, Columbus returned from that voyage with the trophies he had gathered, and proved beyond the reach of a doubt that there was a great stretch of territory on this side of the Atlantic to balance an equal extent of land on the other side, scholarship was hushed into admiring silence and merchants were eager to invest whole fortunes in speculation.

It is impossible for a cautious man to make practical use of a statement which may or may not be true. This rule, which is so constantly illustrated in our every-day business life, is equally applicable to what concerns us spiritually. Do you have grave misgivings as to whether there is any heaven from which a voice can come to your soul? Or, believing in some remote region where the spirits of the departed dwell, do you doubt their ability either to communicate with you or to influence you? Then you are in the position of the Madrid merchant who could not invest money in a country whose existence he knew nothing about. Speaking with perfect frankness, we may declare that this life is all you have practically, for you neither realize the future nor are you in any way affected by it.

On the other hand, suppose you are convinced—as firmly as Columbus was when he lifted his eyes from the acres of seaweed that floated by and saw the thin line of land on the horizon's edge—that heaven is literally within arm's-length; that Jacob's ladder is not a myth, but a fact; that in every man's life there is just such a ladder, and that messengers are constantly ascending and descending; what results would naturally follow? You would be as willing to make use of these truths for your spiritual comfort, sustenance, and encouragement as the Madrid merchant was to invest his money when the Spanish caravels came to anchor with their treasure in the hold.

What you need, therefore, to make you in every way larger and happier is a strong faith in God's actual nearness. So long as He is an inaccessible possibility, a being who thunders from Sinai's hoary summit, a taskmaster who has given you your day's work to do and will damn you at eventide unless it is wholly done and done as ordered, so long will your soul be lonely and your love of holy things burn like a flickering taper, so long will your religion have in it a demoralizing element of fear, and so long will your prayers represent a

perfunctory service without heart or peace of mind or the ecstasy of a blessed communion.

But when God is to your soul what the sunshine is to the wheat-field or the dewdrops are to the flowers, when you not only know that He is, but that He is your refuge and strength in time of trouble, that His love for you is beyond all other loves, that His sympathy and pity are deeper than those of your closest friends—then you know what the peace that passeth understanding means, and whatever ills may befall you, you know beyond all peradventure that a mighty hand is leading you and an almighty arm will defend you.

The joy of such a faith is simply unspeakable. What wealth cannot bestow it generously gives. You may be despondent, but you are not without hope. You may weep, but your tears are unmingled with despair. Trials may come and your shoulders grow weary of the heavy burden, but you have something, a mysterious and transfiguring something within, which distrust and doubt, though in the environment of Paradise, cannot enjoy.

True religion, the religion which holds this life in one hand and immortality in the other, is the

best fortune that ever fell to the lot of mortal man. Assent to whatever creed you will, go to whatever church you please, worship God with pomp and ceremony or in the utter simplicity which disdains all forms—these are matters of secondary consequence; they are only incidents which depend on your temperament or your surroundings. They are nothing, absolutely nothing, and in their use you should have entire personal freedom. But underneath all other things you must have that kind of religion which enables you to say, “And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again;” for that, and that alone, will satisfy the longings of the soul, fit your frail body with divine armor for the battle of life, and prepare you for that eternity in which worship is neither form nor ceremonial, but only love—pure, unselfish, divine love.

SUDDEN DEATH.

“As a thief in the night.”—2 Pet. iii. 10.

THIS is a vivid, almost a startling, illustration of the way in which the inevitable sometimes steals upon us.

After what manner does the thief come at night? Is it not with exceeding stealth, that he may cause no alarm, and with slippered feet and bated breath and cunning silence?

In like manner Death treads softly until he is close at hand. In many cases it is not known that he is in the vicinity until he lays his hand on some one's shoulder and whispers, “Come!” Sometimes he clasps the heart with his icy fingers, and it at once ceases to beat, just as the old clock ceases to tick when you lay hold of the pendulum. At other times a loved one lies on his couch for a few days, never dreaming that his work is done, but rather hoping that the morning will find him

ready to take up his task. Then all at once there are anxious faces and tearful eyes, and before he can realize the situation his soul has broken away from the bonds of mortality and begins its flight into the upper air.

How would you wish to die if the matter were left to your personal decision? It is a subject on which every one has bestowed more or less thought, though few of us, perhaps, have reached a definite conclusion. With another and a better world in constant view, with the full consciousness that on the farther shore you will have an environment far superior to that afforded by the present life, with a profound faith that dear ones over there are waiting for you, what seems the most desirable means of exit from the present and of entrance into the future?

The ideal death is undoubtedly that of old age. If we had perfect bodies, unhampered by inherited weaknesses, we should not die in youth or middle life, but should retain our faculties to the last, and take our leave as the sun does when he sinks behind the hills. If the laws of nature were triumphant, if our ancestors had not left their diseases as well as their property to us as heirs, we might

be hale and strong until the machinery gave way. That is the kind of life and death indicated by the plan of God, but that plan has been sadly interfered with. Such a life, rich and healthy to the last, and such a death, simply falling asleep through weariness and waking up in heaven, are rarely seen.

Many people bewail the sudden departure of loved ones, and regard it as an addition to the bereavement; but this is a mistake. We must think of ourselves less and of them more. If one is to take a journey and the preparation for it is painful, then the quicker the preparation is made, the better for us all. When we must say good-by, a hand-shake is better than a prolonged farewell. If one is called away by a voice which cannot be disobeyed, why should we selfishly hold him in a lingering embrace when lingering means suffering for him?

To enable us to endure the death of some member of our household with sorrowful serenity, we need a stronger faith in two facts; after that, death is a mere incident in the career of a soul, and, though we may weep, we shall also rejoice at the good fortune which has come to the dear one.

First, we must be sure that the end has not come and never will come ; that all that has occurred is a change of residence, nothing more. The loss is ours, the gain is theirs. They are being congratulated on their arrival at the moment when we are in tears over their departure. They have more friends on the other side than they could have here, for this life is made up of many streams, but the other life is the ocean into which all streams flow. If, therefore, heaven and earth are equal realities to us, we may sigh and weep ; but beneath our sighs and tears we shall feel a sense of relief that, though physical suffering may still come to us, none can reach them forevermore.

Second, such a faith must rest on the solid conviction that death makes no change in affection or character. To-morrow we shall be ourselves just as we are to-day, and there can never come a time when we shall suffer loss of personal identity.

Let us take a strong illustration. We have here a bottle of perfume with an atomizer affixed. That body of perfume occupies a definite space and has definite characteristics ; it has, so to speak, an individuality.

In like manner a man has definite peculiarities

and occupies a definite space. He is himself alone and cannot share his identity with any other human being. If by miracle he were compelled to do this, he would be that much less than himself and that much nearer to a nonentity.

Now squeeze the bulb and continue to do so until the bottle is empty. What has happened? The entire body of perfume is dissipated. Not an atom has been destroyed, because all atoms are indestructible, but you have so scattered the perfume that no power can gather those particles together again. The individuality is gone forever, and, though the atoms still live, they live as atoms only, not as an aggregated mass of atoms making a given quantity of perfume.

Some will tell us that that is what occurs to us at death. We are dissipated among the forces of the universe—are immortal, to be sure, but immortal only as force, not as individuals. Christ taught otherwise; namely, that we are personalities and shall remain such to the end of the world, that death is not our atomizer and has no power whatever over character.

Then we need not fear death, but should be glad for those who have got away from the body. They

are over yonder, and our faces are turned in the same direction. Let death come how it will, it cannot disturb us. If it comes suddenly, all the better, for we shall be saved the pain of lingering illness. Let it all be as God decrees, and as for us, we will be ready for the journey whenever we are summoned.

WHAT SHALL WE DO IN HEAVEN?

“Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”—John i. 51.

A CLERGYMAN of this city, eloquent and well beloved, recently discoursed on some of the probable occupations of the soul after death.

It may be regarded as a sign of the times that no subjects excite a wider popular interest than those which refer to what may possibly happen to us after the cemetery gate is closed. There has hardly been an age in the history of the race when a rational faith in the verities of religion has had a stronger hold than now, or when the yearning after some knowledge of the future was more eager or more anxious.

It sometimes seems as though the world had just waked up to the fact that the circumference of another life touches the circumference of this

life, and that those who leave us with a whispered "good-night" will soon greet us with a joyful "good-morning" as we meet on the other shore.

What, then, was our surprise when this eloquent preacher was taken to task for his utterances, on the ground that our occupations in the Beyond are a matter of "idle speculation" for which there is "no basis of knowledge"! Then followed the curious assertion, "Nobody has ever come back from the other world to tell the story of his experiences there."

Let us look at this subject very broadly for a few minutes.

"Idle speculation" for which there is "no basis of knowledge"! On the contrary, speculation of this kind seems to me to be spiritually profitable, and the basis of knowledge is both wide and ample. I say this not in the spirit of controversy, but with the desire to afford comfort to the bereaved. God has taken our dear ones; for a time we are separated from them; but our love remains undiminished, while our hope of reunion, like the candle on the altar of certain churches, is kept aflame by day and night. Is it possible that the Lord has denied us the privilege of imagining their environ-

ment, after assuring us that eye hath not seen nor heart conceived the happiness by which He has surrounded them? Do we contravene any one of His injunctions when with tearful memory we recall the past, and then, in glorious anticipation based on His promise, dream sweet dreams of that home not made with hands, eternal and in the heavens? If He has endowed us with imagination, shall it halt when it reaches the threshold of pearl, and shall we be driven back to a grief unilluminated by a single glimpse of the cloudless sky which bends above the departed? Nay, is it not a prerogative which makes us calm and resigned to think and think what they are doing beyond the stars, and wonder whether they "hold us in full survey," until wonder becomes faith, and faith chases our sighs away and brightens our pathway as with a vision of glory?

"Nobody has ever come back from the other world to tell the story of his experiences there." Then close your Bible and clasp it with a clasp, for it has strangely misled us. Never look at it more nor trust it again, for its pages are a snare and a deceit. It opens with the declaration that God held vocal communication with man, and it

ends with a description of the Celestial City, which makes the nerves tingle with gratitude, while bereavement and sorrow cry out with joy. The imagination is stimulated by the vision which John saw as he sat on the cold rocks of Patmos, and if it pursues its unwearied flight to this heaven of Revelation, will the Lord frown in disapproval?

Nobody has ever come back? Will the Christian say that? Dare he thus throw doubts over the record and impugn the authority of the record-writers? If any one peculiarity of the Bible stands conspicuous, it is the constant reiteration of the nearness of heaven to earth and the repeated assertion that angels have literally visited the habitations of men. Will you throw down the ladder of Jacob, by means of which heavenly beings ascended and descended? Did Jacob feel that he was engaged in "idle speculation," and what would have been his reply to the assertion that "nobody has ever come back from the other world"?

Moreover, did not Christ solemnly pledge Himself to return for the comfort of His followers? Did He indulge in rhetorical license in that hour

of upheaval and utter weariness? Did He encourage the disciples by a mere figure of speech, or did He speak with the gravity of knowledge and with the consciousness that He could keep that pledge?

In my judgment there is no voice which can so effectually whisper, "Peace, be still," to the troubled heart as the voice of the imagination which pictures our loved ones as looking earthward while we look heavenward. Let the picture be as vivid as you can make it; if possible, think of the other home as more real than this one; forever bear in mind the glorious truth that this life is the portico of the temple, and the other life the temple itself; shade your eyes, that perchance you may catch a glimpse of the white-robed multitude beyond the threshold curtained by death; listen, that mayhap you may hear their voices as they sing of the goodness of the Lord. Your own, from whom you have parted, are in that throng, and it will lighten your pathway, bring the ruddy color back to your cheek, the old smile to your lips, and enable you to say, "Thy will be done," if with reverent speculation your thoughts wander from

the portico in which you stand to the temple in which they dwell.

Think of heaven as much as you will, and let there be no limit to your thinking. Your thoughts will irradiate the darkness of this life and prepare you for that hour when, with open arms, you shall be welcomed on the other shore.

BROKEN HEARTS.

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.”—
Ps. xxxiv. 18.

CERTAINLY no one needs the help of the Lord more than these, and it is a great privilege to know that there is somewhere an “everlasting arm” upon which they can certainly rely in time of trouble.

The most discouraging fact in life is that when we call loudest for friends they are not often within hearing distance. If we are not in want of them they are more numerous than we can count, but when we are sinking beneath the waters and stretch out imploring hands, there is no one near to render assistance.

The great sorrows of life must be borne alone, for no one who has not himself trodden the wine-press of a like experience can say the word we need to have said or do the kindly deed we need

to have done. This is a mysterious element in God's providence which it is hard to understand. You may not have company in your Gethsemane, unless it be the companionship of the angels and of Him who sends them.

Broken hearts! Are there any? Perhaps not many if the words are used in a literal sense. We may well thank Heaven that it is so. There is a certain buoyancy, a certain lifting power, in human nature which makes utter hopelessness impossible, except in rare instances. A kind of optimism creeps into the soul just as a child creeps into its weeping mother's arms, and as the child forces a smile from the mother, so this dim prophecy that "at eventime it shall be light" sends its ray of hope into the darkness that environs us. We find it very difficult to wholly despair, for heart-beats have a sort of good cheer in them when the shadows are deepest.

But it is strangely true that there is a very serious significance in the words "broken hearts." Life is sprinkled with disappointments from youth to age. The dreams of earlier times have not come true, and hardly one of us is to-day either what or where he expected to be. The wedding

march has changed into an echo, and its glad vibrations scarcely reach our ears. The riches we longed for have not come, and our ships are still at sea. The plans we made have somehow gone astray, and the children for whom we would have made any sacrifice have been called to heaven. Changes have come like pitiless tornadoes and torn up by the roots many of our most cherished desires. Sickness, struggle, bereavement, poverty, like malignant fairies, have waved their wands over us, and we scarcely recognize ourselves.

These are stern facts, and they cannot be gainsaid. Look back through the corridor of time and see yourself as you were at twenty. What experiences you have passed through! They have left their mark on your face, in your gait, and in your conversation. You have been plowed, and the furrows tell how deep the plow struck.

What shall we say, then? That there is no God? Nay; rather that there must be a God, or matters would not turn out as they have done. Is life so full of bitterness that it is not worth living? Nay; rather, life is a painful means to a joyful end. A hard lesson has been set us and it must be learned. There was never yet a sorrow which

was not a stepping-stone to higher things, and never yet fell a tear which did not bring heaven nearer. It is the evident intention of God that they shall serve these purposes, and the mission of religion is to keep us constantly mindful of that fact.

The sorrowing ones of earth are specially near to the Father, and struggling souls are objects of His special solicitude. It is hard for us to see His face at such times, for our tears are like clouds that hide the sun; but as the sun is surely behind the clouds, so is His face behind our tears. While it is a solemn and an awful truth that perfect sympathy and efficient helpfulness cannot be found elsewhere, it is a glorious certainty that both can be found in Him.

What consolation to know that the Almighty is not far off, that He is neither a stranger to our miseries nor indifferent while we fight the good fight! Even when it seems as though He had deserted and left us to our fate, the rustling of angel wings may be heard, and the prayer of beseeching faith brings a calm into the soul as though He had whispered, "Peace, be still."

Broken hearts! Travelers weary and worn!

Sailors clinging desperately to a wreck! Soldiers wounded almost unto death! Homes made desolate by the invasions of death! Sighs borne on every breeze and disappointed hopes scattered as thick "as leaves in Vallombrosa"!

Yes, this is all true. It is the burden we bear—the burden we must bear. But be of good cheer; heaven, the end of the journey, is not far off. The minarets are glistening in the sunshine, and once there, all will be peace. If we have the courage to say "Thy will be done" in this life, we shall look back in the next life and see, to our surprise, that all was for the best, that God was with us as we toiled along the upward steep, His arm underneath us, His messengers lifting us over the rough places. We must bear our lot bravely, in faith that He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and by and by there will be great rejoicing.

COMMUNE WITH YOURSELF.

“Enter into thy closet, and . . . shut thy door.”—Matt. vi. 6.

VERY few men put themselves under a microscope and look at their souls with the sharp eye of critical analysis.

Self-examination is a prime duty, but a duty which we either neglect altogether or perform with reluctance.

The consequence is that a great many of us have yet to make our own acquaintance.

To use a blundering bit of rhetoric in order to illustrate this statement, our estimate of ourselves is so different from what we really are that we could pass ourselves on the highway without a nod of recognition.

If we knew ourselves thoroughly we should work with more economy of energy and to far better purpose.

If we knew what we are best adapted to do, and had an inventory of the mental and moral material in our possession to do it with, there would be fewer sighs and less heartbreaking.

Calm, quiet, relentless self-examination, however, is the most irksome task which we ever set ourselves, and we gladly avail ourselves of every excuse to avoid it.

The simple truth is, we have a lurking suspicion that we are not as large or as faithful or as strong or as noble as we like to think ourselves, and we rather fear to look into the matter lest our suspicions should be corroborated.

We enjoy the flattery or the impulsive praise of our friends, and try to persuade ourselves that the praise or the flattery is deserved.

In a word, it is a universal fault that we prefer to see ourselves through a magnifying-glass, and have no desire to know the exact truth.

When a contractor undertakes to build a house, his first business is to find out whether the necessary timber and stone are within reach. He has the plan of the house always in mind and so knows what he must do and what he has to do it with. Each of his laborers has a tool-chest, and if any

one should apply for work not having the proper tools or not knowing how to use them, he would be treated with scornful contempt. In practical life, when one wishes to earn his living he must know his trade and have at hand the instruments which alone can make him an available artisan. Nothing could be more absurd than for a man to apply for work as a carpenter or mason who is ignorant of his ability to do what he is to be paid wages for doing.

The same rule applies when we are engaged in building a character. The wise man is a student. He knows what elements go to make up a character and whether he is in possession of those elements, or if not, whether it is possible to develop them and whether a character is worth the sacrifices which must be made in order to construct it. All this self-examination is his equipment, and when he has reached his conclusions he can work intelligently and successfully.

If he is a foolish man—and most of us are foolish in this respect—he neither knows much about the material in his own soul with which he is to do his work, nor the plan according to which he is to shape his life, and as a consequence has no defi-

niteness of purpose and wastes his energies ; for if he begins with ignorance he is apt to end with disappointment.

See the wrecked lives scattered along the shores of time ! What more pathetic picture can be conceived than that of a man who has made the worst of himself ? His early hopes and ambitions, like the timbers of a stranded vessel, lie bleaching in the sun. The waves that break on the beach sound like a dirge, and you can hear in the air the tolling of bells. Why has this misfortune befallen ? In most cases because he had no high aim and was governed by impulse rather than conviction. If he had known himself more accurately his life would not be the tragedy it is.

What can we do, then, to keep ourselves from making these fatal mistakes ? Here is a very practical question. The clergy will tell you to "get religion." But religion is not a thing to be plucked from a tree like peaches. True, you must have religion, but where is it and what is it ?

A very simple rule will unfold the great secret. Acquire the habit of self-communion and everything else will follow. Spend thirty minutes every day in the silence of your own chamber, talking to

your soul about the great concerns of life, and it will not be long before you have God to keep you company. Quiet, restful contemplation is more magical than magic itself. It is utterly impossible for a man to think about himself for half an hour without becoming ashamed of himself, and shame after a little will transmute itself into resolution. Look over your purposes and motives critically and impartially; shut out the world and unfold yourself to yourself. Examine your hopes and fears, coming to a deliberate judgment concerning their value, and you will find sooner or later that invisible beings, "who walk the earth both when we wake and when we sleep," are your welcome companions. There is nothing so nearly omnipotent, so transfiguring, nothing that can so quickly bring you self-control, contentment, and the consciousness of God's presence in your life, as quiet self-examination in solitude. You will find it a Jacob's ladder, up which you daily climb to heaven.

IS FAITH OMNIPOTENT?

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”—Mark ix. 23.

THE incident referred to is not merely remarkable, but startling; for it sets us to thinking along unusual lines. We very naturally ask whether Jesus meant all He said, or whether the expression used, “All things are possible to him that believeth,” was merely rhetorical and intended as a severe rebuke of the skepticism which prevailed among the higher classes and was reflected in the lower. It is evident that the little audience which had gathered on the occasion were astounded at the utterance, and still more astounded at the complete cure which immediately followed it.

That same incredulity has prevailed during the last nineteen centuries, and it is certain that if the Lord should reappear and repeat His words and His miracle, we should be torn by bewildering

doubts and declare that His statement was opposed to the scientific knowledge of our time. We could no more accept it as the revelation of a law higher than the physical laws with which we are acquainted than did the two or three learned Pharisees who looked askance at one another and said, in the language of a shrug, that Jesus was simply an honest enthusiast, ignorant of the inexorable forces which govern the material universe.

Suppose we spend a moment in asking what Jesus could have intended to convey to His hearers by the phrase, "All things are possible to him that believeth." It is clear that He used no figure of speech, but told what He regarded as a literal truth. He was either mistaken in judgment or we have done ourselves an injury in not accepting His statement and making it a factor in our lives.

In the general opinion of our day,—and it is a day of brilliant scientific achievement and wonderfully successful research,—the body controls the mind far more than the mind controls the body. Jesus declared, however, that the mind is the imperator, and that even our physical functions, our health as well as the measure of happiness we enjoy, depend very largely on what we believe or do

not believe ; in other words, that a man is what his mind makes him rather than what his body makes him. A good thought, according to the revelation of the Lord, is better than a powerful drug. While not denying that the world is filled with physical disorders and derangements, He intimates that we must seek for the cause of evil in the hearts of men, and allows us to infer that if our thinking were true and our feelings pure, or, to state the matter in a different way, if we lived closer to God and regarded Him as an actual rather than a theological Father, we should have better bodies as well as more wholesome souls. Diseases are the consequence of conditions of mind, and when the mistakes of the mind are rectified the ailments of the body will be cured.

At first we turn aside from such a theory as irrational and unpractical. Science arches its eyebrows and wonders how long mere dreamers will impose on the populace. Religious folk attempt to explain the words of Jesus in some odd fashion that is unsatisfactory to themselves and to everybody else. But there stands the statement, firm, inflexible, and imperative.

On second thought, we get a faint glimpse of

something that makes us tremulous. It is true, after all, that some maladies have been cured by the remedial agency of faith. We can no longer sneer, for the facts are not to be denied. Even the family of Thomas has examined them and been forced to admit them. A poor creature hobbles on his crutches to the shrine that contains a sacred relic, and in a few moments leaves the crutches behind and goes home whole. Was the cure effected by a miracle? Was the relic the prime cause of it? Not at all. He simply had the miracle-working power within himself, and the relic roused it into activity. He believed, and that unusual condition of his mind started the hitherto dormant forces of his body, and he became a well man. It was the thought in his mind, the feeling in his heart, that ministered unto him, and he suddenly discovered—as suddenly as though the heavens had opened and an angel had descended to make the announcement—that Jesus did not indulge in hyperbole, but stated the simple, unvarnished truth that “all things are possible to him that believeth.”

The best parts of a man are his brain and his heart. If these are wrong the whole man is wrong,

and if these are right the whole man is in a position to acquire health or to keep it. Diseases, many of them, are the consequence of mental conditions, and curative medication is to be found in nobler thoughts and feelings rather than in opiates and stimulants.

If we turn from body to soul, what a magnificent prospect opens before us! Faith is the food that furnishes strength ; doubt is the chronic indigestion that makes us weak and despondent. There is no despair when we can see the face of God by looking heavenward. Give us the globe for a footstool and a constellation for a chariot, satisfy every craving of physical appetite and every mental aspiration, but deny us any measure of faith, and the sun shines in vain, for the cloud within darkens the whole landscape of life. Better faith with nothing than doubt with everything. By him who believes the mountains are removed, the valleys are filled up, the crooked ways are made straight. He travels heavenward with a grateful heart, accompanied by a "cloud of witnesses," who guard him night and day.

VIRTUE IS CONTAGIOUS.

“ Let him do likewise.”—Luke iii. 11.

SOME one has said that if he were able to create a world he would make virtue contagious instead of vice.

A small degree of observation will show that his efforts in this direction would not be necessary, for the Lord has already done so.

It is not as bad a world as the pessimist would have us think; for the general trend of things is toward the good and not toward the evil; and if you look into the matter carefully you will find that what you call contagion inheres in the pure and noble quite as much as in the impure and ignoble. If it be true that flaunted and successful vice allures a great many, it is also true that an honest and knightly life does the same thing.

The career of a business man who brushes aside the restraints of moral principle, who is little more

than a highwayman at heart, and who boldly robs, under cover of law, until he counts his millions, is certainly very demoralizing. No one may measure the extent of its unhappy influence. It is startling and dazzling and enticing. A proportion of our youth become bewildered as they look upon it, and forgetting that there is a moral law which forces a man to pay his debts either before death or after, they pursue the tactics of their idol. There is undoubtedly an appealing inspiration in the life of even the wildest adventurer who defies fate, challenges the world, and by dint of audacity, if not of courage, achieves what he calls success. I have no inclination, therefore, to ignore the fact that there is contagion in a life which is brilliant, even though it be at the same time criminal.

But I insist that there is just as much contagion in a good deed as in a bad one—that the holiness of one life conveys itself into another life and produces the same results there.

In physical experiences the agent of communication is a germ or a microbe; in spiritual experiences it is an idea. I have heard physicians say that the contagiousness of a disease depends largely on circumstances. If you are in a thoroughly

healthy condition your system closes every door and the germ cannot enter; you enjoy absolute immunity from danger. If, on the contrary, you are susceptible or predisposed to the malady, then the germ takes root and you become ill. Whether or not you catch the disease is determined by the weakness or strength of your own body. Nurses may watch over the dying and never feel the effects of the ailment which saps the life of the sufferer.

It is the same in the moral world. Contagion there depends on yourself also, and to a far greater extent. If you lack spiritual strength and ambition, if your sense of honor is only slightly developed, if your self-respect is at a low ebb, then the example of the man who wins a fortune by nefarious means—like the microbe of typhoid—finds a lodgment in your soul, is cherished and multiplied by its environment, until at last immorality has the resistless sweep of a blizzard and tears up by the roots every heavenly and every manly aspiration.

If you had impregnable uprightness of character, if nefarious methods were abhorrent to you, there would be no attractiveness in vicious deeds, and they would have no more alluring power than the

fire has, which may coax you to thrust your hand into it, but which coaxes in vain.

There is contagion in goodness, provided you are in a condition to receive it. A grand and glorious life rouses you to imitation. The reputation achieved by honest methods so affects us that we build a monument to the man who possesses it and tell our boys to go and do likewise. I do not believe that the influence of a pure life can be reckoned, so far-reaching, so inspiring, is it. It is said that the pregnant wives of the Athenians used to spend hours gazing at some beautiful statue, in the belief that something of its beauty would be transferred to the child that was coming into the world. Beauty was contagious, and the little one, slumbering amid the mysteries of a new life, caught it.

When Father Damien died among the lepers of the Sandwich Islands his heroism and self-sacrifice were so contagious that scores of applicants prayed for the privilege of continuing his work, with the certainty of death as the result. Such was the influence of his lonely, saintly, and godlike mission that it was considered a boon to be immured within those leprous walls and to fill at last a leper's grave.

It is a mistake to talk of the contagiousness of vice and to ignore that of virtue. This would be a queer world if one could catch the impulse to evil, but not the impulse to good. It may serve the purpose of the orator who seeks a telling period to tell us this, if he is willing to sacrifice truth to rhetoric, but the stern and glorious facts give an emphatic denial to the statement. Mankind are nobler and truer and more moral than ever before. Public opinion is more generous and more just. We have a larger faith than our fathers, and more true religion than has heretofore been found on the planet. Why is this? Simply and only because truth and honesty and purity and all the nobler qualities of character are contagious, and because the contagion of vice is growing less dangerous year by year.

It is safe to conclude that, after all, this is God's world. For that reason the tide of righteousness should be on the flood, while the tide of vice should be on the ebb, and a little observation will show that this is true.

WHAT IS IT TO DIE?

“ To die is gain.”—Phil. i. 21.

ONE must think a long time, and think very seriously, before he can see any truth in that remarkable statement. He must continue to think, and do so with a much broader view of life and of the hereafter than is usual, before he can agree with the apostle.

We all believe, in a general and vague sort of way, that it is better to die than to live under certain distressful circumstances, but whether we, under like circumstances, should think so for ourselves is a problem about which there is considerable doubt.

God has implanted in us a love of life which is strong enough to make us avaricious of the very last possible day. If that universal dread of death were less strong, we should either make way with ourselves or criminally make way with others under

provocation. The love of life, the sacredness of life, the right of every man to enjoy his life to its uttermost limit of time, is the basis of at least one of the Ten Commandments. Eliminate this clinging and you would make it impossible for human nature to bear its burdens; for it would very quickly seek relief from them in the peace and silence of sleep. While we live, this life is more important than any other life.

But this love of life, curiously enough, must be modified, controlled, disciplined, by the truths of religion before we can enjoy the higher kind of happiness. The clinging is well enough in its way, and it has a divine purpose to achieve, namely, to keep us just where we are until the One who is wiser than we thinks it time for our removal; but unless we listen to what religion has to say about the future, the clinging is like a miser's grasp on his dollars; it becomes a disease, affecting disastrously that cheerful view of both the present and the future which is the peculiarity of the ideal man. Religion is the greatest boon that ever fell to the lot of mankind, because under its benign influence we are resigned to the inevitable while we remain here, and look forward to something different and

better when we shall cross the threshold of eternity. The worth of religion, therefore, as a practical factor is beyond the reach of computation, and in so far as you succeed in making it practical you render yourself satisfactory to yourself and to the world.

Suppose we take the statement of this scholarly and critical and logical Paul and examine it with some care. It is perhaps as startling an utterance as ever fell from human lips. If he had said, "To live is gain," and had revealed the secret of longevity, we should follow his directions gratefully and implicitly; but when he tells us that at a given period in our career it is much better to go elsewhere than to stay here, we wonder what his mental and spiritual point of view may be, for from our own point of view we have doubts on that subject.

If there is any truth in what we think we believe about the future, then to die would be a gain, just as it would be a gain to leave an inconvenient residence and move into one that is more roomy and better suited to our needs. With heaven a glorious reality, we could hardly help being glad when the time came to go there. If it is a place

where we shall not be forced to struggle for the necessities of life, where the limitations from which we now suffer will be removed, where we shall have more opportunities and more encouragement to develop the best that is in us than the present can possibly afford, then it becomes clear that when our friends carry our bodies to the church-yard they do us a service, and the bells ought not to toll, but to chime. Paul evidently had this faith, for he declared that he had a longing to go hence which at times was beyond his power to control. He saw plainly what we see only dimly,—that the most precious thought that comes in our to-day is the thought of our to-morrow,—and he more than once declared that he looked forward to reunion in that other sphere with the fellow-workers in whose company he walked on the earth, but who had said their farewells and taken their departure.

Still, the present life is important. Why we were born in this lower level, and must fall on sleep before we can reach the higher level, I do not know. It is a mystery and will always remain such. But of this I am sure: that for some good reason the providence of God has decreed that a certain amount of experience and discipline and

education is necessary before we can be prepared for the better things to come. We get acquainted with ourselves here, and then, when we have found out who we are and what we are and what our destiny is, the curtain is drawn aside and we cross the threshold of the temple.

Those who have gone await our coming. Our own lesson is not yet learned, but theirs is; and from their higher vantage-ground they watch over us and guard us in ways we cannot fathom. Some day the call will be heard, and we shall obey it. The light of a setting sun gilds the evening clouds with splendor, the rainbow spans the heavens, and we have the rich promise of a fair day to-morrow.

OUR TWO HOMES.

"An inheritance . . . reserved in heaven for you."—1 Pet. i. 4.

IF a man has a happy home his prayer will be one of gratitude and he will have very little to ask of God.

When a boy goes into the world from a virtuous home he is like a young knight, well protected and well armed; for if a child has been fed on truth and honor, he has a slender appetite for immoral allurements.

Our homes are a mint and we are the precious metal which receives its stamp therein.

One may be furnished with a complete panoply at his mother's knee, may be armed cap-a-pie for struggle and victory.

Show me the home of a boy, and I will prophesy concerning his future without a tremor of uncertainty. Show me a man's home, and I can account for his peculiarities, his cheerfulness, or his despair.

A quiet home, on whose altar the flame of love and confidence never goes out, is as close to heaven as mortals can get this side the grave; a home which lacks love and confidence breeds germs of misery, which multiply until ruin has done its awful work.

The purpose of marriage is the building of the home. If there is any other motive—wealth or social position—we perform an act of sacrilege, defy the laws of the universe, and reap a harvest of tears. True love never listens to the ring of gold, and if we clasp hands because they hold a check-book we simply invite the avalanche to crush us. There are broken lives that might have been beautified, stormy lives that might have been filled with sunshine, desperate lives that might have been saintly, lives whose misery no plummet can sound. They are scattered everywhere, and they are the consequence of ambition and selfishness in making the solemn compact of marriage. If there is one relation on earth which should be kept free from mere worldliness, it is the relation between a man and a woman who are to walk in each other's company until death forces a separation. A merely ambitious thought is like a drop

of poison in a tumbler of water, and he who drinks will never recover from its effects.

There is something of God in a true home. With what beneficence He has made the arrangement, and what good things, like a stream of molten silver, flow from it! There are many such on the earth, and they are to the body politic what the heart is in the physical system. They constitute the element of progress and they contain the secret of the noblest manhood and the purest womanhood. Blot out our homes and we revert to barbarism. Man is a mere animal until he sits by his own hearthstone; he is the toy of circumstance, open to the temptations which sing like sirens and end in destruction.

It is the sense of responsibility which makes us strong, and when that responsibility includes the welfare of wife and children, he must be a poor creature indeed who is not broadened and ennobled by it. What one would not do for himself he will bravely do for the protection of his household, and the man who would not otherwise think it worth while to struggle will, for the sake of his home, compel fate to give him what he demands. The consciousness of being loved makes us heroes, and

the thought of our dear ones makes us willing to sacrifice even life in their behalf.

But the home rests on an insecure foundation. We can protect it in some directions, but in others we are helpless. We may give comforts and luxuries, but we cannot give continued health. The circle may remain intact for a while, but there comes a time when it is invaded, and that invasion is irresistible. One never feels so powerless as when he faces a disease which has entered his house unbidden and will not retire when so ordered. The strongest man is only a child when he looks on the body which is the only thing that Death has left. Death and the little one have gone away together.

Then comes a time when we are told that there is a place where these partings are unknown, where love flows on in uninterrupted beauty through countless ages, and we call that other place our home. Two homes we have: one here, with its mingled joy and sorrow; the other there, beyond the stars. The loved ones who perforce bid us farewell, for reasons which we are not able to penetrate, are led through the valley of shadows to eternal mansions, where, their affection un-

dimmed by the change of residence, they patiently await our coming. And while waiting for us they minister to our comfort, are messengers from heaven bearing to our saddened hearts the good will and helpful benediction of the Father.

It is possible to make this lower home like unto that above—so like it that nothing will seem strange when we reach the farther shore. It is possible to enjoy the bliss of trustful love here to such extent that when we are in God's nearer presence we shall simply feel that we have entered a warmer zone. When religion has done its perfect work in us, it will be but one step from the home on earth to the home in heaven.

BEYOND THE HORIZON.

“ In My Father’s house are many mansions.—”John xiv. 2.

WHAT a difference there is between a house in which a family resides and a house that is empty! and yet it is the same house, or, rather, it is not the same house at all.

Suppose you visit it on some festive occasion. The rooms are brilliantly lighted, there is the hum of many voices or the rich melody of merry laughter, and the very air pulsates with buoyant life. There is neither nook nor corner in which good cheer is not found, and as you mingle with the throng you are impressed by the prevailing exuberance. Everything as well as everybody seems to be thoroughly alive, and even pictures and furniture tremble and throb with the general joyousness.

But cross that threshold after the house has been deserted for a few weeks. You are met by

an ominous sort of gloom. The rooms are as they were, the pictures and furniture are all there, but something more than the family has apparently departed. The spirit of the house, so to speak, has gone, and the gathering dust and the hollow echo of your voice remind you that a remarkable change has taken place and that an inexpressible element is wanting.

In like manner, what a difference between a body with a soul in whole-hearted possession of all its functions, and a body from which the tenant has removed! It is the same body, and yet it is not the same at all.

When the man who owned it was in occupation, how warmly the hand was thrust out to give you welcome, what generous words fell from the lips, either in congratulation or in condolence, and how flashed the eyes as though each were a hearthstone filled with blazing logs! The body was subject to the will of the tenant and obeyed his slightest behest. It ran or walked, danced or sang, knelt or climbed, with a kind of glad willingness.

But something has happened. There lies that body, but it stirs not. It is neither hospitable nor kind. You recognize every feature, but still your

friend is not there. You speak, but the ear is dull for the first time. You take the hand, but there is no responsive pressure. The eyes refuse even to open, though they were never guilty of such discourtesy before.

What has occurred? Only this: that your comrade has moved out of his old home and gone elsewhere to live. You did not see him go and you cannot say exactly where his new residence is, and for that reason you are mystified and perhaps greatly troubled. What we do not understand is apt to disturb us. But the only difference between the first illustration, the empty house, and the second, the empty body, is that when the family moved they left word as to their destination, and the sufferer who moved did not.

It does not follow that because you do not know where your friend is he therefore is not, and yet that is the illogical assertion which doubt reiterates, to our constant dismay. We often drop a tear on a grave, whereas if we could see things as they are we should whisper our congratulations to the air in the hope that the dear one might hear them.

The soul is too important to die, and the body is too unimportant to exist for more than a few

decades. It is a very curious fact that every man is in love with his own soul or personality. He prizes that something which he calls his real self above all other possessions. He would not exchange himself, even though conscious of many a weakness, for any other human being on the earth. He may find fault with fate and deem himself harshly used ; still, he would rather be himself with poverty than any other with wealth.

Not so with the body. That is quite another matter. No one thinks of his body as himself—only as a minor part of himself. He would be glad to have another body, just as we would be glad to move out of a wretched hovel into a well-built mansion. We by no means have the same pride in body that we have in personality. We might be happy to get rid of the one, but nothing could tempt us to part with the other.

And what reason do you suppose God could have for destroying a soul? Nothing else in the universe is destroyed, and why should the greatest of His creations suffer a fate not meted out to the meanest? The body exhausts its possibilities and then falls back to dust. It reaches its climax, and longer duration would add nothing to the perfec-

tion of its functions. But does a man's intelligence, does his spirit, exhaust all possibilities? The mental and spiritual appetites are merely whetted by our earthly experience; we simply acquire a keen relish, and then the house falls into ruin and we must leave it.

Another body, another life, another environment! That is what the soul has prophesied for itself as a consequence of God's goodness and wisdom. And then comes ringing through the ages the Voice which checks our tears at separation and transmutes them into the hope of reunion, saying, "I go to prepare a place for you."

I know not where heaven is and scarcely care to inquire; but it is somewhere, and the thought is to the heart of a man what the falling rain is to the parched fields.

OUR FAITH AND OUR BODIES.

“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”—Prov. xxiii. 7.

THERE are certain passages of Scripture, of which this is one, whose real significance is at last being discovered.

In the diamond-fields of Africa priceless stones have remained for ages unknown and undisturbed ; and in the domain of spirit precious truths have lain for centuries unrecognized. By some happy chance an explorer of the African wild stumbles on the scattered gems, and the world is at once made richer. By an equal chance a scientist or philosopher announces a new principle or truth, and we find that some old prophet or seer taught it centuries ago, and the world has been deaf until now.

The text furnishes an apt illustration. In a vague and general way we have always believed that a man's thoughts possess a kind of creative

energy, but we have not appreciated the practical value and importance of this fact. We have simply glanced at it and then passed by on the other side. The rough diamond was under our very feet and we every day trod on the spot where it lay, but not until recent years has any one picked it up and polished it and shown us its radiant beauty.

At last, however, it has been revealed to us that in its broadest sense the heart makes the man, and that the words, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he," are not the expression of a poetical fancy, but of a literal and awful, as well as an encouraging, truth. The basis of all true reform lies in the fact that body and soul not only reflect each other's moods, but that in the ideal man, the Christ man, the soul is undisputed master of the body.

Physicians assure us that mental conditions produce—that is, originate—bodily disease. Therein will be of the profoundest problems of the profession, and in some cases its despair. We are startled beyond measure when told that not only will vicious habits result in physical derangement, but that continuously vicious thoughts have the same tendency.

The world has gone wrong for many generations

and become entangled in the meshes of inherited maladies simply because men have chosen their own way in opposition to God's way. The world's mental attitude has been the fruitful source of all the bodily evils from which it has suffered. If the universal mind had convinced itself in the beginning that unselfishness is more profitable than selfishness, that purity pays dividends while impurity lays assessments, and had continued through the centuries to lovingly live along the lines of the Creator's plan, pain would be a thing unknown, the word "disease" would never have been coined, and death would be like the sweet sleep of childhood, from which we would wake in heaven. So far as the world is God's world, it is perfect; so far as it is man's world, it needs the succor of mighty remedial agencies.

Now, since mental conditions produce disease, then it must follow that mental conditions^{ruth} may check disease and even produce health. Let us linger here for a moment, for we are kneeling on the ground as the Christ passes by, and touching the hem of His garment; we are on the threshold of very wonderful discoveries, the value of which cannot be estimated. If it be true that to possess

the Christ spirit is not merely to bear the ills of life serenely, but also to prevent them to a degree, then for the first time we lift our religion out of its theological environment and make it a priceless, practical truth. When it is forced upon us that no man can be wholly well, either in body or in soul, who is not consciously God's child, and that we are well or ill in body and soul in proportion to our filial relation to Him, then we put religion where it belongs, on the strong foundation from which in our ignorance of natural and moral law we long ago removed it.

The important fact for men to recognize is this: that the cardinal virtues are the corner-stones of a healthy body and a healthy character. The spirit of the Christ dissipates that condition of mind which produces disease, and tends to reproduce health as surely as wheat-seed, if properly sowed, will furnish a wheat-crop. The assertion is entirely within the bounds of known scientific law, that the ideal man is he who reverently looks to heaven and says, "In Him I live, and move, and have my being."

Here is the grand lesson to ponder: that faith is reposeful, that it is the equivalent of strength,

for it is the miracle-worker that not only enables us to bear pain, but lessens the pain itself.

How wonderfully practical Christianity becomes! You must feed the mind with wholesome thoughts, or you will vainly feed the body with wholesome food. Your physical comfort depends on what you are able to see when you look into the heavens. The heart is the man. It is like the spring, in which the river has its source. Unless the spring is kept pure, the river will be turbid to its very mouth; and unless the heart is kept pure, there can be no home, no health, no happiness. Undefined religion is nothing else than the Christ spirit, which makes each event of life a stepping-stone to higher things, and death the topmost step, from which we are lifted into heaven.

THE SEASONS AND THE SOUL.

“Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night.”—Gen. viii. 22.

THESE are the changes which mark the recurring seasons of the year, and their counterparts are to be found in the life of man. A year and a man pass through precisely the same experience; for in the history of every human being are to be found periods of heat and cold, of seed-time and harvest, and of day and night.

The thoughtful man, who carefully watches what may be called the struggles of nature, its joys, its shadows, its clear and its cloudy skies, its fragrant flowers and noxious weeds, must feel as though he were looking into the glass of fate, wherein he sees reflected all the peculiarities of his own spiritual life. He and nature are passing through precisely the same changes, and there is neither weed nor flower, neither ice nor heat,

neither tempest nor calm, for the one, which the other does not equally experience.

What more exquisite in their beauty, their fragrance, and their mystery than the bubbling, babbling, joyous springtimes of nature and of man? We are puzzled by the processes of growth in both instances, and by the boundless exuberance of both.

Within the seed is a handful of omnipotence, a moiety of intelligence, and when it is bedded it silently sets about a task so marvelous that if you were to see its work for the first time you would hardly contain yourself for wonder. What is that divine propulsion which draws from the soil materials which the most skilful chemist cannot reach?

The boy is spiritually a seed also, and the mystery of his growth is equally beyond solution. What marvels of possibility are packed within that narrow soul! As the sculptor finds an angel in every block of marble, and with hammer and chisel slowly brings it to view, so in every boy there is a grandeur of character, an archangel's excellence, all the elements of that kind of success which God smiles upon. They need but the Master's hand and the discipline of life, and then you will see a true nobleman.

The springtime is full of gladness and fragrance and laughter and a certain kind of happiness, but is it, after all, the best season? I think not.

Then comes the summer, with its torrid heat, its fields of ripening grain, its vineyards and orchards laden with their luscious products. Nature has been hard at work, and the results of her toil are in evidence. The very planet must be heavier, since all the blossoms of spring have changed to fruit so generous in weight that the branches can hardly bear the strain. Abundance, abundance everywhere.

An equally curious transition has come to the boy. Childish things have been put away, and he is bearing with the strength of physical maturity the heat and burden of the day. With a godlike intellect he makes companions of the stars and forces from them secrets which stretch through the countless years of the past; he corrals, for the practical benefit of mankind, the innumerable natural laws which have never before known subjection except to the will of God. They are tamed and harnessed, and become as obedient and docile as were the genii of fairy tales.

Summer is the season of achievement. The

man has developed capacities which excite our wonder, for he grasps the east and the west with his two hands. The earth trembles under his feet and the heavens are within easy reach. And yet the appetite for knowledge grows by what it feeds on, and he is impressed and oppressed by the consciousness that he has not reached the limit of discovery or of his own ability to discover. Is it true that he will continue to grow, or is there a boundary which he cannot pass? It has not yet been found, and the future beckons him to still greater accomplishment.

Therefore, I say, the summer of life is not its best season.

Autumn comes with its chilling frosts, and winter treads on autumn's heels, its arms full of snow and ice. The earth yields up its glorious harvests, then becomes drowsy, and soon falls on slumber. The sap no longer flows, the leaves wither and cover the ground, the trees in orchard and forest are denuded, and a kind of sadness hovers over the earth like a canopy of cloud.

The same experience comes to man. His maturity has passed, his work is done. The heart begins to beat like a muffled drum, and the presage

of approaching dissolution whispers strange possibilities in his ears.

Ah! but the fields and forests are not dead; they only sleep. You may grow sad in winter, but both fields and forests will tell you that they are glad to rest awhile, for another spring will soon beckon them, and then they will begin the work of production once more.

The correspondence between nature and man still continues, for the winter of life will by and by give way to the springtime of eternity. The man who dies has not reached the limit of his powers, but in some other world and under more favorable conditions will take up the work which death forced him to relinquish.

I say, therefore, that the best season of the soul's long year is the springtime of immortality that is to come.

WHEN WE GET THERE.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly.”—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

WE shall have a great many curious experiences when we reach the “house not made with hands,” for, once safely out of the body and beyond its limitations, we shall be able to look back and solve some of the puzzles of this present life.

When a man has lived in a narrow valley for many years, his mind becomes as narrow as the valley and he almost necessarily takes a narrow view of things. Lift him, by some magic, to the summit of the mountain, let him look down on the little place in which he passed his summers and winters and then out on the boundless landscape that stretches beyond the reach of his vision, and he at once becomes larger and broader. He understands on the instant a great many things which have heretofore been hidden from him. When he

lived in the valley he wondered about a thousand matters, but only had his labor for his pains, because his wonder asked questions which reason could not answer. From the vantage-ground of the summit, however, he simply looks abroad and many of these questions answer themselves.

Or, again, if a man lives in the dark, he can find out a great deal by groping, and as far as he is able to go his information may be quite correct. From the little he knows he may fashion a theory of the many things he does not know, but that theory will be always open to doubts and subject to change, because he is dealing with matters beyond his vision. Suppose you were able to draw up the hidden curtain of some hidden window and let the blazing glory of the sunlight into the room in which he has lived. He would be at first embarrassed, if not positively frightened, and it would require time for him to become accustomed to the new state of affairs; but how much he would learn, and in how short a time he would learn it! A single glance, and many of his preconceived notions would fall like withered leaves; another glance, and the actual truth concerning things would gradually dawn on his startled but delighted mind.

Something of that kind must needs happen when we open the door on the thither side of the tomb and step from the darkness of death into the bright light of eternal life. When the first bewilderment has passed we shall look back with a kind of regret that it was possible for us to so misunderstand the beneficent purpose of God in the experiences which were allotted to us.

We shall see that this life is really very beautiful, for earth is only a suburb of heaven and if rightly used would be full of happiness. It is hard to believe that it was God's intention that we should suffer as in a great many instances we do suffer. Unless we declare that God's moral, and, for that matter, His physical laws also, were made to be broken, we must insist that much of the sorrow which burdens the heart is the result of our own misdoing rather than of God's doing.

That discipline is necessary we will not doubt; but why add to the discipline of a wise and kindly Providence what ought to be classified as the penalty of broken laws? When God hurts us we can bear it, but how shall we bear the hurts we inflict on ourselves by the wilfulness and wantonness which He has distinctly forbidden us to in-

dulge, and which He must punish in order to teach us the terrible lesson of obedience?

All this is very puzzling to us just now, and in the silent watches of the night the eyes of the body have been kept wide open, because the inquiring eyes of the mind could not see the solution of the mystery. But when we are free, when we stand on higher ground and look down on all we have done and left undone, we shall discover that at the first God filled this lower life with all possible happiness, and that our perverse and perhaps ignorant attitude toward Him has conjured up evils which are permitted by Him, but not approved.

If we could only come back from heaven and bring our newly acquired knowledge with us, how little our second earthly life would resemble the first! In other words, the Christ spirit alone makes life beautiful, and if we have not that, then there are awful experiences in our months and years, just as in the landscape there are disfiguring chasms, and precipices, and lava-beds, and long stretches of arid and unproductive territory.

The lips of the body may laugh at trivial things, but when the soul laughs and is merry, it is because God is not far off and heaven is nigh at hand.

The serene heart is the obedient heart—the heart that beats in unison with the eternal truth of things. It is always quiet, even as Christ's heart was quiet, because there is nothing to fear and nothing to dread when God's sentinels guard the home. Love, faith, peace—these are golden keys which hang at the girdle when man is his best self, as the dear Lord intended him always to be, and they unlock the mysteries of the present and turn the bolt in the door of the future. Love God; be faithful; for, though just now you see through a glass, darkly, it is a Father's hand that leads and a Father's strength that protects you.

EASTER MORNING.

“The stone taken away from the sepulcher.”—John xx. 1.

I IMAGINE that astonishment reached its utmost limits when the people of Jerusalem learned that some one had rolled the stone away and that the tomb was empty. A great many declared, and with some show of reason, that what had apparently happened had certainly not really happened. How could it happen? they asked one another, disdainfully. Was He not dead, and was not His death attested by the spear which pierced His side? Were not specially instructed guards set to watch the place, and do Roman soldiers fail in their duty when death is the penalty of neglect? How, then, does it come about that so strange a rumor fills the air?

There was scarcely a household in the whole magnificent city which, on the morning of that third day, was not profoundly stirred. Cheeks

were flushed as the facts were related, and the discussion of possibilities waxed hot. Some shrugged their shoulders with contemptuous incredulity, and others simply replied, "He said He would rise again, and He has kept His word."

We of a later generation, living in an environment of scientific marvels, hesitate before declaring that anything is impossible. Experience has taught us caution, for what our fathers could not believe we not only believe, but explain by laws hitherto unknown.

When we have been told heretofore that Christ appeared to the disciples in that upper room, the doors being shut, even the most reverent among us have been unwilling, if not unable, to argue the matter. But recent discoveries have opened up a new world to our wondering eyes. We have hardly yet recovered from our bewilderment at the statement of what has been accomplished, and scarcely dare think of the further miracles that may be achieved in the near future. Has not the foremost science just declared that among other miracles it may yet be able to pass a solid through a solid; and have not all our notions of the impossible been thus scattered to the four winds? On

this Easter morning, for the first time in twenty centuries, the sudden appearance of Christ in that upper room strikes us as not entirely strange. A whole series of higher laws—laws which thrill us with wonder and gratitude, laws the very contemplation of which moistens the eyes and makes the heart feverish with excitement—are being discovered. It seems as though heaven itself were not far off, and as though the hour had struck when Christ, who once said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,” had begun to make a second revelation.

“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” These are questions to which answers are easily found. Nature has herself suggested them. For instance, on that leaf in your garden crawls a common grub; it is ungraceful in its motions and unattractive in appearance. You doubt my word when I tell you that within the body of that crawling creature are packed away a pair of wings which will some day come into use; that from this low form of existence will be evolved something so entirely different that you cannot recognize any relation between the two; that it will slough off this slimy coil and be-

come a thing of beauty, cutting the air with many-colored wings and sipping honey from every fragrant flower. You doubt all this, unless you have had experience in such matters, refer me to the sharply drawn lines between the possible and the impossible, and hint something about the credulity of those who believe in fairy tales. Nevertheless the new creature is hidden in the old, and in good time the grub will stitch away at its own shroud. It will fall upon sleep, and when the delicate and marvelous change has been made it will burst its bonds and emerge a butterfly.

Hardly more strange than that is man's passage from the mortal to immortality. Untried faculties are hidden in every human soul, like the wings in the grub, and at no time in this lower life do they come into full play. We crawl, but by a curious instinct we long to fly. You cannot persuade us that mere crawling is our manifest destiny and that there are no grander things to be done than those we are now doing, for we are half conscious that in the rags of our beggary a prince will sometime be found. The tomb is only the chrysalis in which we fall asleep. The grub weaves its own shroud, but the hands of loved ones perform that service

for us. So come the dim shadows of night on each in turn, but in the morning the finger-tips of angels touch their eyes, and they waken, to join the glad company of those who have gone before and who gather about them to give them welcome to the new world.

It is all wonderful—gloriously, grandly wonderful, and gloriously and grandly true.

GOD'S CHILDREN, ALL.

"Am I my brother's keeper?"—Gen. iv. 9.

UPON every man that lives is imposed a double responsibility: he is definitely and sharply responsible for himself, and to a certain extent for every one who comes within the sphere of his influence.

The man who wants everything is apt to end by being in want of everything, while he who gives freely is apt to grow richer in heart, though he grows poorer in purse.

It is curious to note our dependence on one another and how impossible it is to be sufficient unto ourselves. The world may get on very well without us, but not for a day can we get on without the world. It furnishes us with pretty nearly all the materials out of which we build character and success. It donates a thousand physical comforts and conveniences which we could not fashion for

ourselves. It surrounds us with certain moral influences which are the growth of ages, and presents for our imitation the careers of its noblest heroes in every department of life. You are but one thread in the great fabric, and would be counted as nothing but for the other threads which give you your importance.

Out of these facts certain duties grow, and these duties, properly set in order, make up what we call practical religion. It is a system of religion that can rouse our deepest enthusiasm, for it is based on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It goes back to the time when shepherds fed their flocks on the everlasting hills, and it goes forward as far as the millennium. Men may speculate as they please about the nature of duty and the various methods by which salvation can be attained, but their creeds may all be whistled down the wind like so much thistledown, for over and above all creeds and all speculation, even as a giant bendeth over a child, these two facts tower in splendor and majesty: namely, that religion consists in love toward God, a love that flies upward to the stars, and love toward man, a love that makes each sufferer our neighbor, or, better

still, our brother. The angels stoop to earth with smiling faces whenever a man sacrifices his own comfort in order to encourage some disheartened soul. The æolian harp makes exquisite music when the breezes sweep over its strings, but the human heart makes far better music when willing hands have busied themselves to uplift a fallen brother. There is no satisfaction so nearly divine as that which comes when God's angels knock at your door and thank you for saving one who but for your efforts would have gone far astray.

You would not dare to sit indifferently by if some one, blindfolded, were staggering toward a precipice. It would be the rankest heresy and the most contemptible cowardice to declare that no responsibility for his fate rested on your shoulders. If by your exertions you can save him, you are by that fact made responsible for the injury that befalls.

You cannot wrap your mantle of self-righteousness about you and pursue the policy of saving yourself and letting others take their chances. The Fatherhood of God repudiates that kind of religion, and the brotherhood of man grows pale at thought of it.

There are many precipices, and many blind-folded souls are staggering dangerously near the edge. Temptation drives with a whip of knotted cords, and our passions and appetites deprive us of our common sense. Men are reeling toward a thousand hells, and pits of perdition yawn everywhere. Shall you be dumb or sit at your ease because there is no pit near you? If a man falls whom you can save, you also shall fall in the great hereafter. If souls are crying out for help and you sit idly by, there is no heaven for you either to-day or to-morrow. You are your brother's keeper, and you can do nothing better for yourself than doing something for others. If you can say, I have saved this man or that man, the angels will reply, And at the same time and by that very act you saved yourself.

What a grand thing, then, is religion! With what dignity it bears itself, and how majestic is its mien! What a grasp it has on the heart, and what fires of love it kindles! How close to God we get by getting close to our fellow-men, and how near to heaven we are when surrounded by good deeds! Speak, then, the kindly, cheering word whenever opportunity offers, reach out the helping

hand to those needy ones who cross your path, and you will be surprised to find brightness and gladness in your own life ; for no one ever clasped his brother's hand without discovering that in some mysterious way he clasped God's hand also. The world is beautiful when there is love in the heart.

GOD'S SYMPATHY.

“ He also will hear their cry, and will save them.” — Ps. cxlv. 19.

ONE of the most impressive facts in connection with Christ is His loneliness. To a very large extent He was isolated from human sympathy. Not even His nearest friends could appreciate either His motives or His work, and it was therefore impossible to make a confidant of any one. What personal suffering was consequent upon this entire lack of contact, either mental or spiritual, with His kind we shall never know ; but certain we are that His only sources of consolation were the ministry of angels, who, I imagine, were always visible and always near at hand, and the presence of the Father, of which He was conscious all the time.

There are some epochs in our own little lives when in a far-away manner we resemble the Christ in this respect.

As a general thing, and with regard to ordinary experiences, we not only look for, but find, an abundance of human sympathy. It is one of the most beneficent of decrees that we shall not bear our burdens alone. In the emergency, friendship is quick to offer its services, and the moistened eyes of our neighbors respond to our grief. When there is crape on our door, other households are hushed as though they shared to some extent our affliction, and ready hands are held out, and generous and helpful words are uttered, which make us feel that there is a great deal of kindness in the world, after all.

And this sympathy is a very marvelous and at the same time a very precious thing. We never go alone to the churchyard to leave the body of a loved one there. It would be a strange thing and unaccountable to go alone on such an errand. We should wonder what it meant, and feel that the grief which had fallen on us had somehow been doubled by the indifference of our friends. It is always a procession that goes to the cemetery. There are many who go with us, and they reverently stand by our side, ready to do what may be done for our consolation and comfort.

Neither are we alone when some malady stalks into the house and lays its iron hand on one of the family. When our hearts quake, the same stroke makes other hearts tremble with sympathy. If there are two pianos in a room, you cannot strike the chords on one without awaking responsive vibrations in the other. Heartstrings vibrate even more quickly. What is more natural than to run to the aid of one who is falling, and what is more divine than to make a personal sacrifice in order to carry comfort to some tired soul? It is by such deeds that we are made to feel the brotherhood of the human family and therefore the Fatherhood of God; and it is a glorious fact that, though we find it sometimes difficult to rejoice in the good fortune of another, since shameful envy blocks the way, it seldom happens that we fail to be sorry for another's misfortune.

But there are certain experiences which we feel it necessary to bear alone, and they are doubly severe for that reason. It is impossible to take any one into our confidence, partly because no one can fully appreciate the situation, and partly because we are unwilling to communicate the facts. How many griefs there are the records of which

are only kept in the hieroglyphics of a wrinkled brow or a dimmed eye or a faltering step! Not time, but trouble, whitens the hair sometimes, and changes the whole outlook upon life, and what that trouble is you must lock up in your heart's profoundest vault.

There are two kinds of sorrow—that which all the world is free to know, and that which you cannot tell. When the son dies the news spreads itself, but when he goes wrong you protect him by keeping silent. That story cannot pass your lips, neither can it be wrung from you. You never needed sympathy more, but the sympathy that is human you cannot have. There are other sorrows of a like nature, and they come to young and old alike—sorrows to be kept close and never uttered. They are found everywhere, and if you could lift the wide world's curtain and see them, you would be sorely troubled. How many griefs we suffer alone, and what a strange burden they are!

It is a great comfort, however, to know that what we cannot find below comes down from above laden with a blessing. It is not that we cannot hide the secret from Him and therefore pray, but that we know it is safe with Him and

that His sympathy is perfect. Every door on earth closed, but the windows toward heaven wide open. Not the ear of the profoundest friendship may listen, but we gladly tell it all to Him. There are some things which only God and we may know, and religion establishes such a relationship between us and Him that we can feel a friendly arm underneath us and hear with our hearts the voice of good cheer. That vital religion, practical to the last degree, is to the soul what air is to the lungs—a something absolutely necessary to comfort, contentment, happiness. You can live without the sympathy of your fellows, and in the deepest experiences you rather shun that sympathy; but you cannot live without the sympathy of the Father, nor yet without the watchful care of His angels. With a confidence in Him that never wavers, and a faith in the unseen agents whom He sends to your rescue, you not only need fear no danger, but you can also be peaceful and quiet in very troublous times.

THE MISSION OF DOUBT.

"A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."—Acts xi. 24.

EVERYBODY has doubts, just as every ladder has rungs. As the rungs suggest climbing and at the same time furnish the opportunity of doing so, so doubts suggest the possibility of reaching the grandest truths and are frequently the means by which we attain them.

When a young man tells you of his doubts you may be sure that he has begun to think seriously. He has simply put his ladder in place and has his foot on the first rung. Doubts are nothing more than a dark passage, at the other end of which is eternal light. They are what antennæ are to the insect—the instruments which nature has provided and which decide whether it is safe to take the next step or not. If a man has never entertained

a doubt his opinion is not worth asking for, for a doubt is the first expression of the intellect when it begins to make a theory of the universe.

Doubt is a dark passage leading to the light, but it is exceedingly unfortunate when a man loses his way in the passage and never reaches the light. Such a one is to be greatly pitied, because at the end of life he will have missed its most beautiful experiences. No one can possibly enjoy himself as thoroughly amid the somber shadows of unbelief, or of non-belief, or of what is called agnosticism, as when basking in the warm sunshine of a reasonable faith. If the doubt is the end of it all, and there is nothing else to come, the situation is as unsatisfactory as that of a man who should spend his whole life in climbing the ladder, never reaching the higher level against which the upper end of the ladder rests.

Human nature is so constituted that faith is absolutely necessary to happiness, and your doubts are nothing more than the sifting or winnowing process by which you separate the chaff from the wheat. In other words, your doubts examine all statements with a critical eye, and so carefully superintend your constructive work that when you

say positively, "I believe," it means that your faith is wholly reasonable.

This appetite, or hunger, or craving for faith is everywhere visible. If we were to lose confidence in the commercial honor of our fellow-men, the wheels of industry would suddenly come to a standstill and the hum of enterprise would be hushed. It is a strange thing that the commerce of the world rests—and securely, too—on the simple belief that every man will meet his obligations. If we enter the inner circle of our civilization, we find that the sanctified products of home life depend on the loyal and unselfish love of father and mother. Throw a doubt of that loyalty into the home, and it is like hitting a piece of fine porcelain with a hammer. The fire on the hearthstone is kindled by faith and kept alive by faith. Faith in each other is the central idea of home, and it is as impossible to have a home where that idea does not prevail as it is to make a cheerful blaze from wet and soggy wood.

As in commerce and in the home, so in your religious life, you must have faith. In commerce the lack of faith will produce an immediate panic; in the home the lack of faith means misery and

broken hearts; in religion—but there can be no religion without faith, and a community without religion is like a man who tries to warm his hands on a block of ice. It was Voltaire who said that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. It is belief in God's existence and faith in His wisdom which furnish all the noblest motives that actuate us, giving us a key with which to unlock mysteries, and the resignation of cheerful submission when the waves of misery dash over us.

But that kind of faith comes from the victory we have won over our doubts. To begin with doubts is simply to whet your appetite for truth; to end with doubts is to give that whetted appetite no food to eat and so to die of starvation. It is faith, after all, which produces all the magic in our lives, for it is just as necessary to our personal happiness to lift up our hands to heaven, in the belief that unseen beings will lead us through the falling night, as it is for a child to believe that its father will protect it in the coming storm. We are so made that if we ask for the best things they must come down from above.

Your doubts have a mission, and if they accom-

plish that mission, all will go well ; if they do not, all will go ill. They serve an admirable purpose when they are simply wayside inns, wherein you take rest and lunch while on the journey, and then push forward to something better. But you cannot live comfortably in a wayside inn and you cannot live happily in a doubt. Faith is not an inn, but a home, whose roof will shelter you ; and every man knows that home and heaven are closely related to each other.

THE PEACE OF THE SOUL.

“ For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”—Phil. iv. 11.

IT is not uncommon to hear a rich man say that his years of struggle were the happiest of his life, thus proving rather conclusively that there is nothing in wealth itself to make a man happy.

The hope to attain is always an inspiration, but actual attainment is frequently a disappointment and sometimes a positive misfortune. The climbing boy, who keeps the summit in view and makes a thousand efforts to reach it, is really leading the ideal life ; for every function, physical and mental, works under a health-giving and pleasure-giving excitement. When a man has reached the summit, he too often finds that his ideal has suddenly disappeared.

It is rather evident that the chief purpose of this present life is to try to succeed, but not to succeed

wholly. The noblest man is he who has not yet done all he expects to do, and whose soul is lighted up with anticipation of better things to come.

The true philosophy of life, therefore, teaches us to do what we can, but not to worry because we cannot do more. A man needs ambition, just as a horse needs the spur; but you can spur a horse until he becomes nervously exhausted, and a man can be so ambitious that he loses sight of honesty and moral principle and rectitude of character—in which case he may be a millionaire, but he is at the same time a spiritual wreck.

I would say to a young man just crossing the threshold, Struggle for a fortune if that is your dream, but give the proper price for it and no more. It never pays to exchange self-respect for anything which this world can offer. Keep your soul pure, even if you are compelled to keep your body poor in order to do so. In the long run—that is, at the end of forty years, when you shall have learned to take a large view of affairs and when the glammers of youth shall have passed—you will discover that the things which money cannot buy are what you want most and that your

bank-account has much less to do with personal happiness than you thought possible in earlier days.

And I would say to the man in middle life who has fallen on despair because he must still work hard and spend with cautious care, that the best fate that can befall is the necessity of earning a living, provided labor and contentment live under the same roof. It is not labor that kills, but worry. Cheerfulness can toil by day and sweetly sleep at night, but discontent wears the body and annihilates every noble impulse. There is no disease more harmful than this, none that can make greater ravages. It is the frost that nips the tender shoots and makes a harvest impossible; it is the prairie fire that heats the soil until the very roots are killed.

Now there are some things which you need not hope to attain; then be content without them. You must not wrench yourself in the hope of grasping what is hopelessly beyond your reach, and if you have learned that fact and give yourself to making the best of what you have or can have, you are living on true Christian principles; you

have something better than the philosopher's stone, for if you cannot by your magic turn cruder metals into gold, you can make even adversity smile, and, like the bee, get honey from the thorny thistle.

The man who makes the most of the little that he has is of more intrinsic worth than he who owns worlds, but is unhappy because he has not more. The only religion I care anything about is that which teaches me to be of good cheer and makes me grateful for what I possess. We do not need the half of what we demand in order to make life comfortable. A slender income with a warm heart is better than riches and a restless soul.

Let your strivings, then, be after contentment. Get out of each passing day all the sweetness there is in it. Live in the present hour as much as possible, and if you live for character your foundations will overlast to-morrow. It is when men build without moral principle that they need fear the future.

If you have a serene and quiet trust in God, without whose notice no sparrow falls to the ground, the events of life will arrange themselves into a kind of symphony. I do not say that you will be able to carry a dear one to the churchyard

with a smile on your lips, but I do say that the prospect beyond the churchyard will mitigate the pain of separation. And I assure you that there is nothing in this wide world worth half as much as that peace of mind which only faith in the good God can give.

RESTING QUIETLY.

“ I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.”—Ps. iv. 8.

PEACE and quiet are what the soul longs for, but under present conditions it can have very little of either. Irritation and worry produce abnormal states of mind and are to be avoided for the sake of physical as well as of spiritual health. A perfect poise, that altitude of faith from which the ideal man looks down on the perplexities of life in calm survey, and looks up to a God who from that point of vantage seems close at hand, may be difficult of attainment, but it is worth all the struggles it will cost.

A soul which is always at rest, not because the experiences of life are restful, but because the experiences of life cannot seriously disturb it—that soul is already in heaven, though the threshold of death has not been crossed. We talk too much about going to heaven, whereas it would be more profitable to discover how heaven can come to us.

Daily life is truly a hardship at times, but we ought not to open our doors in welcome to the thought of hardship. On the other hand, let us bolt the door to that thought, dwell on it as little as possible, and give our warmest welcome to the thought that when we and God are working together all burdens are lightened. There is always peace in the heart that is conscious of God's presence. It is because we do not know that He is with us, and more than half doubt that He is anywhere, that we become nervous, irritable, uneasy, and unhappy.

I cannot conceive of the Christ as ever feeling that God was not in perfect command of the world. Had He doubted it for a moment He could not have walked so quietly through the Via Dolorosa toward the Mount of Crucifixion. While not indifferent to the torture that awaited Him, His soul was in a region far above bodily pain, and He was more concerned about the spiritual ignorance which converted the multitude into a mob of criminals than about the physical pangs He was soon to undergo. You cannot drive a spike through a man's thoughts, and if his thoughts are sufficiently elevated the spike that is driven

you are in His hands and know you are there, the "Peace, be still," has been uttered, and you have the only true religion. After that you will be at rest inwardly, even though your eyes shed tears. Life may not be always easy, but your attitude will make its burdens lighter. When there is something to look forward to the heart becomes quiet; and if one has a thought from heaven to cheer him, he can bear the ills of life with calm serenity of mind.

LOOKING AT YOURSELF.

“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.”—Ps. cxix. 59.

THERE are many things in this world which it would be well for you to know, but the best of all things is to know yourself; not because you are specially worth knowing just at present, but because you may be worth knowing by and by, since self-knowledge is the starting-point to self-improvement. No man can have an exact knowledge of what he is without having also an incentive to be something better.

A watch cannot mend itself. Exquisite bit of mechanism though it be, it is not conscious that the hair in its cogs prevents it from keeping time. Even if it were thus conscious, it would have no power to get rid of the hair. Whenever it goes wrong it must be taken to a master workman, and

he with cunning skill removes the hair and sets the watch right.

A man differs from a watch in one important respect. He can remove a spiritual obstruction himself, but not until he has taken himself to his ideal and made a careful comparison of the two. If he has no ideal he is a lost man, for he who is entirely satisfied with himself is a prey to all manner of temptations.

As the captain of a vessel cannot say that this or that is the right course until he casts his eye upon the heavens and notes the position of the polar star, so is a man powerless to reach the highest end until by careful study he learns what the highest end is and what means he has to reach it. The captain who has no polar star to guide him will sooner or later drive his vessel on the rocks, for ignorance never yet supplied the place of wisdom; and the man who has no ideal will never become his noblest self, because he does not know what that noblest self is.

Our friends think us better than we are, and our enemies think us worse than we are. The first exaggerate our virtues, the latter our vices. An exact estimate, a perfectly fair appraisalment,

is not to be had from anybody in the world, and that is to a certain extent a misfortune. If, therefore, we wish to know just who we are and just what we are, we must take time to acquire the knowledge, and must do the work in solitude. It is a matter of serious concern, but you are quite capable of achieving the task and it is quite worth doing. When you have seriously asked and answered the questions, What kind of a bundle of possibilities am I? and, What can I do with the raw material that is stored within? and, What help is there anywhere in the universe for one who wishes to be all there is to be and to do all there is to do? then you tread the border-land of glorious mysteries, then you come into personal contact with Almighty God, and then you get a glimpse of true religion. No man can do the best without first seeing it, but if he once sees it he can hardly help trying to do it. One does not waste his days to acquire copper if he knows where gold is to be had.

It is because men do not know about the gold that they become satisfied with the baser metal, and it is because men have been drenched in creeds that they cannot see how beautiful and simple and

helpful is that kind of religion which Christ was sent to preach and to practise. The cruelest thing that ever happened was to put a speculative theory of Christ in the place of Christ's life and words. When the creed is hidden behind the Sermon on the Mount then all goes well, for in looking at the sermon you forget the creed; but when the Sermon on the Mount is put behind the creed then things must needs go badly. When the setting of the gem is so constructed that the gem cannot be seen, you practically have no gem, but only a setting.

The only remedy is for men to think for themselves. He who thinks climbs. To think deeply is to find God. If you think your way down into the depths of your soul you will hear that soul's cry for help, for souls are always crying for help. And soon after you have heard the cry you will hear the answer. The cry comes from yourself; the answer comes from God.

Lost in the forest, you lift up your voice, and through the still air comes the response of the guide. The moment you hear each other, you and your guide, that moment you and your guide approach each other, and it cannot be long before you and he will stand face to face.

It is so also in matters of religion. You cannot carefully examine yourself without seeing that life is a strange mystery and that you need some one to lead you aright. You call—that is prayer—and Some One hears and answers. The yearning of the soul brings all the hosts of heaven about you. Then when you and He have met the problem is solved, the clouds are reddened with beauty, and you have begun the religious life. You cannot be without religion so long as you and He are in company. For that matter, God's presence is itself religion, and you need nothing more. You will find Him when you find yourself, and once found, your life will be serener and heaven will open its arms in welcome.

A REASONABLE RELIGION.

“ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.”—1 Thess. v. 21.

THE man whose religion will not stand the test of careful thinking has not very much to boast of. Feeling has more to do with religion than thinking has, but the thinking ought to come first in order to give direction to the feeling. A man's feelings should always be indorsed by his brains. You do not want a theory of politics which will not hold its own against the doubts and questions of your neighbors, and it would be absurd to have a religion which refuses to answer your inquiry as to its credibility and usefulness.

A man should have faith, and he should know why he has it. If he is physically ill and receives from his physician a prescription which relieves his malady, he has a confidence in the doctor which is reasonably based, and whenever the malady

reappears he very naturally has recourse to that same prescription. It is not at all necessary that he should know how or from whence or why the physician came into that section of the country; neither need he puzzle himself as to the doctor's pedigree during the last century or two. These are all interesting matters, and if he has time and inclination it will do no harm to enter that field of exploration, but they have practically no relevancy to his disease or its cure. If you were to make the rash assertion that you would not take the remedy until the doctor recited all the incidents of his past life and made you acquainted with the secrets of his experience, you would be a strangely unreasonable creature. The important question is not when or where the doctor was born, but whether he understands your case and can restore you to health.

Now a great many persons are unwilling to accept the providence of God, because they cannot see how He exists and in what way the providence acts. He must not only do them good, but explain how He does it. You might just as well say to the apple-seed, "I know that there is a mysterious life in you, and that when put into the

ground you can burst your shell, push up slender shoots, grow into a beautiful tree, and bear rich fruit; but I refuse to plant you until I know how all this is done." You would not regard such a man as a reasonable creature. Your reply to his statement would be that he is both foolish and stupid not to avail himself of a delicious product because he cannot tell how it came. If the thing itself is proved beneficial by experience, then the more of it he can acquire the better. If he wishes to study the occult mystery of growth in his leisure hours, no one will say him nay; but it is not absolutely necessary to know anything about an apple except that it hangs on the branch and that he has a right to pluck, eat, and enjoy it.

But some folks put theology first and religion second, whereas the world would be better if religion were put first and men were allowed to deal in theological speculation much or little, according to inclination. Religion is the apple on the tree. What is called "getting religion" is nothing more than eating the apple and by that means convincing yourself of its value. Theology, on the other hand, is an inquiry as to the various and subtle natural forces which have combined to produce the

fruit, and as to the method of their activity. I say, therefore, that theology is the luxury of the few, of the inquisitive and scholarly few, but that religion, which consists of eating the apple, is the divine privilege of all. If it is not reasonable to judge of the worth of anything by the effect resulting from its use, then I must confess to being greatly puzzled.

But your doubts? Well, doubts come mostly from speculating about matters which no finite being can settle beyond dispute. No one ever lived without doubts. It would be an absolute impossibility to do so, and I am not at all sure that it would be desirable to do so. If you have never doubted, it is probably because you have never thought very deeply. Science and philosophy are full of doubts, and these doubts have led to unexpected discoveries. When the ordinary man begins to think about God and providence and prayer and heaven, he becomes dazed and bewildered, just as astronomers in the time of Galileo were dazed and bewildered by the innumerable worlds overhead which played hide-and-seek with them. The time may come when we can uncover the mysteries of the Infinite as science

has uncovered the courses of the stars, but certainly the time is not yet. The time may also come when our spiritual vision will be so developed that we shall see what the prophet saw—hosts of angels in the air; but that millennial period has not yet arrived.

What, then, is the standard by which to estimate the value of religion, and what kind of religion would you call reasonable? If you experiment with the principles which Christ announced, and find that they work untold benefit, that they make you sympathetic, honest, generous, noble, and manly, are you not reasonable if you adopt them as the policy of your life? On the contrary, would you not be unreasonable if you failed to do so? We have many doubts about the theology of our fathers, but have we any doubt at all concerning the beautiful faith which made them brave and strong in times of great trial?

The question is easily decided. If you take the doctor's prescription and it either relieves or cures, be sensible enough to avail yourself of that doctor's services, and though there be a mystery about his birthplace, your confidence in him need not be disturbed. Take the apple that hangs within reach

and eat it. If it quenches your thirst and satisfies your appetite, it makes no difference who planted the tree or how the fruit came from the blossom.

A reasonable faith in religion does not depend on your knowledge of all the secrets of the universe, but on your knowledge of what that religion will do for you. In other words, the only true test of religious faith is to be found in personal experience. Mere argument amounts to nothing; a fair trial settles the matter beyond cavil. Those who have tested it most severely prize it most highly.

A BETTER RELIGION.

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.”
—1 Kings viii. 57.

It is said that in the material universe higher conditions are being slowly evolved from lower conditions, and that the earth is a better place to live on than in the long ago.

It is said also that this evolutionary process is constantly going on in human society, that new forms of government arise from the old just as a blossom comes from a seed, that laws, customs, public morality, modes of living, are undergoing a change for the better, and that the world is sweeter, cleaner, purer, nobler, and kindlier than it has ever been before.

Furthermore, it is said that what we call progress does not show any fatigue, but is as vigorous and hopeful as ever, that what has been accomplished is but a faint prophecy of what the distant future

will witness, and that the ideal man is on a summit which will sometime be reached, but is now enveloped in cloud.

If in all things else the good is being changed into the better, surely religion is not to be excepted. If we put on new garments elsewhere, we ought not to wear the same old soiled clothing when we go to church. If we have learned some of the startling secrets of nature, we ought also to discover new secrets in the soul. One cannot say of religion alone that it is fenced within certain narrow limits, that our fathers explored it thoroughly and there is nothing more for their children to know.

It seems to me that nothing is more wonderful than the progress which has been made in our knowledge of spiritual matters during the last few generations. There is no subject on which inquiry is more acute or which appeals more urgently to the attention of mankind. Men not only acknowledge the necessity for larger faith, but they have a kind of hunger and thirst for it. The longing to know more about soul as distinct from body, and about the future to which we are all hastening, is not only ardent, but even pathetic. There is a prevailing conviction that we are on the

verge of some glorious discoveries in this direction, and so we strain our eyes to catch the first glimpse of them.

More than this, there never has been a time when the Bible was read with more intense curiosity than now. It is no longer read in the search for dogma, but as a repository of spiritual truths which have not hitherto been understood. We have regarded the Book as a treatise of theology, since theology has occupied the pulpit to the exclusion of nearly everything else, and for that reason it has practically fallen into disuse. That is the stern, hard fact—the Bible has been regarded with reverential indifference, because it has been misinterpreted and misrepresented. But the hour is at hand when this severely practical age will make a new use of it. The day of dogma has gone by and the day of high and holy living has begun to dawn.

The Christ is being revealed to us in a clearer light. Old things are passing away and all things will become new. We are getting closer to the Lord's person, and the little we have newly learned prompts us to kneel and kiss the hem of His garment. We see that He was the exponent of laws

which, when fully understood and applied, will make men physically healthy and enable them to live on so high a plane that only a veil of gauze will separate them from heaven. He trod that eminence and assured us that what He did we can do also.

It is true that even Jesus wept, but what a difference between His tears and ours! I am even inclined to think that He wept not so much on account of the death of His friend as because the sufferers from this affliction took so low and meager a view of it. What was death to Him? Only a transfer from the valley to the hilltop. When we stand where He stood and when we see what He saw, our grief will not be what it is now.

Yes; and when we make His outlook and up-look our own, we shall open the soul's windows for God's streaming light to pour in. These petty ambitions will dissipate themselves, these pains and sorrows, which are so largely created by our doubts and fears, will subside, selfishness will slink away, and the dear consciousness of God's presence will make us quiet under His providence.

Then the world will indeed have a religion and the soul will find safe anchorage. That religion

will be like a current of electricity, chasing all maladies away and giving men the vigor and enthusiasm of eternal youth. The eyes will behold wondrous things and the heart will leap for joy. Once know God as He is, once catch a glimpse of the real Christ, and we shall live within a stone's throw of heaven all the time.

SOULS AND BODIES.

“That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.”—Rom. xii. 1.

“He shall give delight unto thy soul.”—Prov. xxix. 17.

THE relation between a man's body and his soul may be likened to that between a violin and the man who plays on it.

A skilful player can bring good music out of a poor instrument, but he cannot do his best work unless the violin is capable of expressing the harmonies he has heard in his dreams.

In like manner the best instrument in the world produces poor music in the hands of a tyro. He handles something which he does not appreciate, and which to a certain extent loses its value because he cannot make it do what it is capable of doing.

The ideal music is made by a skilled player with a perfect violin.

So the soul and body must work together if the

best results are to be attained. As God made it the body is the noblest conceivable residence for the soul during this preliminary part of its career. It was not His intention, it was not a part of His plan, that the ailments of the body should interfere with the normal development of the soul. If they do, it is because some natural law has been broken. It is impossible to think of God as responsible for a body that is imperfect, and equally impossible to believe that a body could ever become imperfect or defective if God's wishes had been observed and His commands obeyed.

We have fallen from the grace of physical wholeness. The mere animal is better off than man in this respect. It follows its instincts, which make no mistakes, while we follow, not so much our reason, which would keep us from going far astray, as our passions and appetites, which are capricious and reckless. The lion is perfect within his limitations; he lives without worry and dies without pain; he is like an exquisite piece of machinery, which does its work with ease until the power that drives it is checked. That will sometime be true of the human race. When we learn what it is that produces our maladies, and have strength of will

to avoid it, we too shall live in health until the body, like an old house, tumbles down and the soul seeks a better home.

But the reform must commence in the mind and the heart. We have already begun to see that a man with impure thoughts cannot have a perfect body, and that there is a preservative element in high and holy thinking. Perhaps I may venture to go still further and say that when the mind has a vision of the perfect life, the body itself will be somewhat affected thereby, and that the physical functions will make an effort to repair themselves when the soul consciously and practically lives and moves and has its being in Him whom no evil can touch.

I mean simply this,—and the truth of what I say will be recognized by all,—that disease is wholly abnormal, and that the only natural state is a state of health. We are not physically what we ought to be because we are not morally what we should be. The lower part of a man's nature has caused every malady from which the world suffers, and no effectual remedy can be found until the lower is made subject to the higher. When men come to be more faithful, more loving and

tender and charitable, the inheritance of nobler qualities will slowly obliterate our present heritage of physical evil, and the perfect man will be seen on the earth.

The spring of all issues, good and bad, is in the heart and mind. Give me a perfect body to begin with, and if God's laws are my laws I shall keep that body perfect to the end of life's pilgrimage. Feed me on unworthy thoughts, stimulate my animal passions, make me selfish and greedy of forbidden pleasures, and the crooked mind will in time make my body crooked, for in the long run the mind is the body's master.

As I take my place on this standpoint and look abroad on human life, I am oppressively impressed with the fact that what men need more than anything else—more than all things else—is the religion of the great Master of our souls. Give me no man's creed as a substitute; do not ask me to drink of the painted river on the canvas when I am thirsty, but give me that living water—the "water of life," it is significantly called—which is the secret of Christ and of His power. I want to know Him personally, and care little to know simply about Him. I must have that which He had,

must live the life He lived, must share His thought of God, His trust in the Father ; then my faith will make me whole, body and soul, and keep me so. If God dwells in me there is no room for evil there.

The religion of the day is too formal and perfunctory. It is not real and genuine, but adulterated with all sorts of notions and theories. It is the Christ we need, who could say, "I and My Father are one," and who prayed that we might be one with Him in a like fashion.

God is willing, but man is unwilling. There is a conduit that leads from the mountain spring into the home, from God to the human heart. So long as that conduit is in perfect repair it will furnish all the spring-water we can use ; but if the conduit is broken and the refreshing water escapes or only falls a dripping stream, drop by drop, the generosity of the spring counts for nothing.

In very truth, I think, our formalism and folly have broken the conduit between us and God's great love. Our religion consists of only a few drops. Mend the conduit, and all the love of heaven is at our service. Healthy bodies and noble souls will be the result when we accept the Christ in His fullness.

THE SOUL'S POSSESSIONS.

“For all things are yours.”—1 Cor. iii. 21.

OF course St. Paul had something very definite in his mind when he made so strong an assertion as this, but what it was the world does not yet fully know. There is apparently a kind of mysticism in the text, and though two thousand years have nearly passed, we have only just begun to appreciate its significance. If we shall ever be able to accept the statement as literally true, and to assimilate that truth in our spiritual life as the body assimilates food and is made strong and healthy thereby, we shall have a religion so practical and so priceless that we shall depend upon it as we depend on the oxygen in the air to give vitality to the blood.

In his second letter to the Corinthians he explains, but in a way that is somewhat vague. When this wonderful ownership of all things has

been accomplished, he says, we may still be "troubled on every side," but we shall not be "distressed"; we shall be "perplexed, but not in despair"; we may be "cast down," but we shall not be "destroyed."

Such a prophecy stimulates our curiosity, if not our ambition. If it is possible to develop a state of mind which can look down calmly and hopefully on the evils which invade our lives, and cheerfully regard them as a part of our discipline so necessary to our welfare that we trust their dispensation to One whose wisdom and love we cannot doubt, then two results must naturally follow: first, we shall see that our heretofore conception of religion has been exceedingly defective and erroneous, and second, that the religion of the future will be more beautiful than anything the world has ever dreamed of.

What is this marvelous ownership of which the apostle speaks? It is evidently ownership by the soul, not by legal contract. Let us think a moment. When a man says he owns a fine tract in the country, dotted with hills and lakes, overarched by clouds in the daytime and by the studded firmament at night, what does he mean? Is it possible for him to own the grandeur of the pros-

pect or have certain other rights which no law can ignore? Do his legal documents debar you from the delights which the extended landscape affords, or do you share with him the undulating beauty of the land and the shimmering glory of the sky? Can he keep these things for himself alone? Is it not true that the best part of his possessions is just as much yours as his, and very much more yours unless his ability to appreciate is equal to your own? The real owner of these things is God, and there never yet was a landscape on which the whole world did not have a lien. No man living can say that it is all his, for the human law is powerless to deprive you of the right to look and to have your soul warmed to worship by what you see. It is your privilege as well as his to say, "This is all mine," and his registered deed counts for very little. The truly noble souls literally own the whole earth—its beauty, its glory, and the aspirations which it fosters. All other ownership is petty in comparison and fosters the greed of gain, which is a disease.

When, therefore, you say of a man that he is rich, you are far from the truth if you merely refer to his material possessions. Money makes no one

rich. The rich man is he who owns his soul and is proud of that ownership. You cannot put real wealth into your pocket or into a bank of deposit. No matter who says you nay, you may have countless dollars and still be a beggar; but if you have ideas, and moral principles, and rectitude of character, and eyes that seek and find the beauty which God has scattered everywhere, you are rich and your life is worth something to yourself and to others.

Is it not possible to carry this principle so far that a soul can say, "My God, my Father," in a possessive sense? May it not be true that whatever God has is ours, since He is so willing to give it to us? Is there anything He will not give us if we know how to reach forth our hands for it and to use it for our advantage? If a soul dwells in God, and if God therefore dwells in a soul, are there any limits to that soul's attainments?

If we were thus godlike, disease would flee from the body as night flies before the rising sun, and the same natural law would be operative in both cases; our attitude toward the world would no longer be one of defiance or desperation, as it is now, but, calm and quiet, we should meet our

fortune as the Christ met His, and that very attitude would dissipate half the ills from which we suffer and give us strength to bear the rest; our tears at separation would lose their bitterness in the hope, or rather the certainty, of reunion; heaven would become such a grand and vivid reality that the roughness of the path which leads thereto would seem of little consequence.

We shall never know what true religion is until we understand that "all things" may be ours, and we shall never really become religious until we have entered upon the possession of earth and sky and God and Christ and whatever may be included in the "all things" of St. Paul.

Think of living from day to day undisturbed by the world's envyings and heartburnings, standing on so high a level of thought and purpose that heaven itself opens its doors every now and again, that we may catch a glimpse of what awaits us. That is what God would have us do, that is what the Christ actually did, and that is what the ideal man can do and will do. Our present conception of spiritual possibilities is crude, but the time is not far distant when men will see so much of the other world that this world will be transfigured and glorified.

DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season . . . ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”—1 Pet. i. 6.

IT is a curious fact that in the New Testament, which is a revelation of God to man and equally a revelation of man to himself, the word “duty” should appear only twice.

In the popular conception of religion there is one very grave mistake—a mistake which has done much to disturb our filial relations with the Almighty, and to make the religious life a tiresome routine, a sort of day’s hard work for the sake of the wages to be received at sunset. Nothing could be farther from the heart of the Christ, and nothing could more effectually check the generous ardor with which tried and troubled souls should seek the divine presence for advice and succor.

If religion is not a satisfactory thing in itself, just as a cooling breeze is satisfactory in August

or a blazing fire on the hearthstone in January, then its value is very seriously diminished. And if one does not feel that the practice of religion brings its own reward here and now without reference to the future, then he misinterprets the purpose of God and all his wine is turned to water.

The word "duty" means obligatory service, and seems to imply that it is not our choice to render it, but that we must do so for fear of consequences. The man who obeys for any such reason is living on a very low plane. His conception of God is more or less that of a taskmaster rather than of a Father who notes even the fall of a sparrow. So long as we view religion from that standpoint we shall live beyond earshot of heaven, clinging to the present and dreading the future.

We are called the "children of God." I do not imagine this to be a figure of speech, but the statement of a literal truth. Well, to draw an illustration from home life, would you say that it is the duty of a son to love his mother, or of a daughter to love her father? Should the boy feel that while he ought to love his mother it is very difficult to do so, because if he followed the bent of his nature he would be indifferent to her?

Would it be possible to say that it is a man's duty to be grateful for some great benefit which is conferred upon him? The word "duty" seems to be peculiarly out of place under such circumstances, for it contains a libel on human nature. He cannot help being grateful, for he is so constituted that gratitude rises to the surface without an effort, and if he were not grateful he would be something less than a man.

In like manner, it is not a man's duty to love God; it is his inalienable right and his inestimable privilege. From the moment when he appreciates God's love for him his heart goes out in unrestrained confidence and trust, and that confidence and trust are the corner-stones of the temple in which he worships. And when he comes to see what this life is for, and how the Almighty has so arranged events that he can weave them into a wedding-garment to wear in heaven, then he has the religion which Christ preached, and his gratitude, so far from being an irksome duty, is as irrepressible as the waters that bubble from the spring on the mountain-side.

While in our relations with God there are no duties, but only privileges, in our relations with

ourselves and with our fellow-men there are many of them, and it often requires an effort to perform them. For example, it is a duty to love our enemies, and that is hard; it is a duty to bless them that curse us, and that is not easy; and it is a duty to resist the temptations which creep into the soul to corrupt it. It is something of a task to keep one's self unspotted from the world, for the spirit of evil knocks at the door with gay impudence, and makes a thousand promises with no intention of keeping any one of them.

But even these duties would be transformed into privileges if we lived on a higher religious plane. Christ alone possessed a perfectly rounded system of religion. He had the whole, while we enjoy only a small part. It was not an irksome task for Him to pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—not in any sense a duty. His nature was such that He could not have done otherwise. He lived spiritually on the mountain-top, while we are in the valley. Our religion, beautiful as it is, has still an element of the barbaric in it. God is near us, always near us, but we have not yet invited Him to occupy our house. We can be grateful when He does what

we think He ought to do, but when He does what contravenes our wishes, our state of mind is peculiar and forbidding.

The ideal religion! If the first gray streaks of dawn are so inspiring, what will be the perfect day? When universal love of God gives rise to universal love of man, and real religion first checks, then destroys, the selfishness which is our bane, and enables us to cling to Him with even profounder filial affection when dear ones are being borne to the churchyard or when misfortune robs us of the comforts of life,—and that time is surely coming, —then duties will be altogether abolished, and we shall do His will simply and only because it is better than our own will, and do it gladly.

When we exchange our plan for His plan, it will be like dropping a pebble to pick up a diamond—like laying aside our untuned harps to listen to the music of the angel choir. God knows best. To believe that is to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

RELIGION IS LOVE.

“ Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. xiii. 10.

ALL the world believes that love is better than hate. It never has been and never can be a subject of debate. It is perfectly clear that if love and revenge and selfishness were personified and made sculptors, and each were given a block of marble to shape into his ideal, Love's statue would be more beautiful to look upon than the works of the other two.

If each were given a violin and told to put his inmost thought into musical expression, the listeners would very quickly draw near to Love and desert the others.

That fact is a tribute to human nature. It proves beyond a peradventure that we all take delight in what is highest and noblest, even though in our daily life our practice is defective. We know what

we ought to do, and we wish we had the strength of will to do it, though we may never make the effort. The ideal is in the heart, but covered up by the rubbish of worldliness. In other words, we have never done ourselves justice, and no one knows it better than we.

What is it, then, that the world lacks? Only one thing, and yet that one thing is everything. St. Paul calls it love, and he intimates that when a man has this quality of character he has all that can decide his fate both here and hereafter.

It is "the fulfilling of the law," and that phrase is curiously inclusive. If you have love of God and love for your fellow-men, you have the secret of human happiness and an open sesame to the future. God will never reject a soul which has acted from this motive, for it will make a man angelic, and the proper place for angels is heaven.

When Christ talked to the people who gathered on hillside and by lake-shore, He proclaimed the simplest form of religion that ever found utterance. There was nothing in His language that the humblest Judean peasant could not understand. He advocated no theory and debated no theological propositions; but He reached down to the very

center of human life and gave us a truth which no duration of time can wear threadbare, which is fresh and beautiful in all climates, among all races, and in all ages.

Love God and you cannot go far wrong. Love your neighbor and your years will be set to music. You cannot love God without trusting Him, and you cannot love your neighbor without developing that side of your character which is noblest.

The world's universal crime is selfishness. We have educated it until it has become a mania. It controls our thoughts, our plans, our actions. Events are simply sponges from which we squeeze some benefit for ourselves, and we carry this so far that the rights of others are utterly ignored and self-gratification becomes the only god who claims our hearty worship.

And what is the selfish man, after all? A mere wreck of a noble soul, its divine possibilities chained, cramped, handicapped, muzzled. He feeds on plenty without a thought of those who starve; he laughs without a glance at those who weep; he reaches out his hand to grasp resources which he does not need, and piles up wealth which he cannot spend. The injunction, "Freely ye

have received, freely give," is so changed that he prays, "Freely give to me, and I will give nothing to any one."

Suppose you could put a genuine love into the hearts of all men. We should have a very heaven on earth. You would double the sum of human happiness, and the happiest of us all would be he who had alleviated suffering by some gift from his abundance. I am not sure that God Himself would not walk and talk with men as in the days of yore, but I am sure that the gates of the New Jerusalem would swing on their hinges to let the angels out on a visit to the loved ones here below.

A thousand beliefs will not make you an honest or a pure-hearted man. All the theologic formulas which famous councils have ever passed are powerless to achieve that result. When we make theology the standard of excellence we reverse God's order. He who believes as others do is not, therefore, a Christian ; but he whose heart is full of love, though refused admission to every church in the land, though wandering in odd byways because the King's thoroughfare has been closed to him by ecclesiastical interdiction, travels ever in the sweet companionship of Christ and will some day

be with Him in glory. To have the Christ spirit, rising each morning with gratitude, sleeping each night in the consciousness of God's protecting care, because the day's work has been God's work and not your own—that is salvation already secured.

Your complexion, your race, your social position, your sect, your mode of worship, your wealth or poverty, are matters of no consequence whatever. No one in heaven ever thinks of such trivial peculiarities. Do you love yourself last? is the Lord your employer, or do you conduct your business in your own behalf alone? are you kind to your kind? These are the only important questions. If you have not this love, your life is but a tinkling cymbal; it is a mistake, it is a crime. If you have it, you have fulfilled the law, and when the right time comes you will find your wedding-garments in readiness for you. The soul of religion is love, and all else is mere body—worthless material, which will count for nothing in the future.

BE OF GOOD CHEER.

“Thou hast put gladness in my heart.”—Ps. iv. 7.

IF one would make his life profitable and happy, he must be at great pains to fit himself to his circumstances or environment. A vast deal depends on the successful endeavor to do so, because in that way only can he maintain in ordinary times a calm and cheerful, or in the stress of sorrow a resigned, state of mind.

Not that he need be entirely satisfied with his environment, for it is also his duty to look forward to something better and to make such changes as ambition may prompt or an honest effort achieve. But to be forever discontented with what you have is to lessen, or possibly to lose, the power to make the best of it.

There is a kind of restlessness which is almost godlike, for it implies that the soul is capable of

indefinite progress ; and as the clothes of youth are outgrown in manhood and we purchase others which fit our increased stature, so the soul must change its garments and put on larger thoughts and projects and hopes. There is another kind of discontent, which is thoroughly depressing and is therefore to be avoided, because it draws the curtains down and forces you to sit in the dark.

When a man says, " This is well enough for to-day, but to-morrow I shall have more and better," he is in just the state of mind that makes the more and the better possible. But when one feels that his circumstances are not only a hardship, but also an injustice, he can neither get out of his present the best there is in it, nor look forward to the future with anything like good cheer. The people who indulge in this latter train of thought are a very bad sort of Christians. They are at odds with themselves and with the Almighty ; they spend so much time in wishing that things were not as they are that there is no time left in which to use their experience to the best advantage.

If we would recognize how much we have to be grateful for instead of finding fault because there are those who seem to be better off than we, we

should find a deal of comfort to which we are now strangers. The difference to a man's soul, to his temper, to his general disposition, and, not least of all, to his bodily health, between the conviction that he can do great things with what he has, and the conviction that he can do nothing because he has not what he thinks he ought to have, is practically the difference between a life sweetened by faith and effort, and a life embittered by an estrangement between himself and the very nature of things.

It is true that there are human beings who seem to be greatly favored by circumstances or by the accident of birth, and also true that some have very little capital of opportunity. Why this is so no student of nature or of theology has been able to tell us. It is one of the puzzles of creation, and we can but guess at a solution. Perhaps by and by, when we reach a higher vantage-ground and look back on these fleeting years, we shall be as grateful as we are now critical. The matter is not explained either by Christianity or by any of the natural religions which have swayed mankind.

I leave the problem, therefore, to take care of itself, and ask my soul this far more important

question: How can I get out of what I have all the enjoyment and good cheer it is capable of affording me? If my neighbor rides while I walk, if he has plenty and I have little, aye, if he has robust health and I bear about with me a thorn in the flesh, I would rather pray for a contented spirit than waste my energy in envy of that neighbor. I do not care how humble one's circumstances may be, there is certainly something beautiful and holy to be found within the narrow circle. The poorest man who ever lived, who had not where to lay His head, who was laid in a manger at His birth, and who died on the cross, could find a world of beauty in a flower and a helpful truth in the flight of birds.

We think too much of our environment and not enough of our destiny. Wealth has very little to do with happiness. Money gives nothing to the heart, can purchase neither a moral principle nor an aspiration. Strip the millions from one man, take away the poverty from another, pull off everything until you get down to the naked soul, and you find that the only real difference is a difference of character. Environment counts for nothing, but character counts for everything.

I say this, therefore: give no attention to what others are able to do or to enjoy, but devote yourself to doing and enjoying all that is possible in your own small life. There never yet was a night without a star, and if you search for the star and do what you can to ignore the darkness, you will find more happiness than you ever dreamed of. The habit of looking at the bright side is well worth cultivating; it is a kind of practical Christianity which the world knows too little about. Religion is not worth much if it encourages your discontent; for, after all, if you and the Lord keep together you will always be in good company and always have something to make you glad and cheerful. What is around you will be brightened by what is above you, and to-day, cloudy though it be, will be made radiant by the hopes that come from the great to-morrow.

SPIRITUAL POSSIBILITIES.

"For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."—Luke xvii. 21.

THERE is an immense amount of unconscious make-believe in our acceptance of religious truth. We assent to it theoretically, but make no use of it practically. With most of us religion is up in the clouds; we have not yet learned its value as a dynamic force in daily life. What we most of all need is to really believe what we say we believe.

If one tells us that we can "abide under the shadow of the Almighty," we regard the expression as very beautiful rhetorically, but repudiate it as the statement of a simple fact. If the preacher recites the text in which the Master says, "Greater things than these shall ye do," it seems impossible to believe that He meant exactly what He said. Though the statement is constantly reiterated that

angels guard our footsteps and are always within hearing distance of our cry, we merely think we believe, for it is a belief without full appreciation. It is all more or less dreamy, and we are very far, though the world has been pondering the subject for two hundred generations, from accepting the nearness of heaven or the ability and willingness of God to exercise a providence over our lives. In a word, we walk around the outside of the temple and admire its architecture, but we have not yet opened the door and explored its interior.

It is not so in some other matters. For example, when some gifted seer experiments with steam or electricity, and tells us how they both can be utilized to make life more comfortable and to furnish us with unexpected conveniences, we always take him seriously and literally. We apply steam as a means of transportation and use it in the ten thousand ways in which it will subserve our commercial and domestic purposes. We accept the assertions of the electrician literally, and in full confidence stretch the mystic wires from ocean to ocean. That confidence is repaid by a series of miracles, for the harnessed lightning is a willing servitor, carrying our words under Atlantic waves and across

continents with inconceivable speed. In this way life is practically prolonged, for we can accomplish in our seventy years more than the old sages dreamed of in their seven hundred.

There have been those who have had the same kind of implicit faith in religious truths and who have utilized them in the same way. We look at them with wonder, and with something of envy also, confessing that, while physical laws properly applied may produce admirable results, it is still more admirable to capture a spiritual law and make it the servant of a divine purpose. In the early days of Christianity strong men and weak women were cast into lions' dens or tortured to death by devilish contrivances. They faced their fate with a smile, because their faith was an omnipotent reality. They believed in God just as we believe in the law of gravitation, and were just as sure of going to heaven as we are that the sun will rise to-morrow—so sure that they would not compromise one jot or tittle in order to save their lives. If you say, as the agnostic does, that their faith was nothing but a dream, my reply is that the dream which can make such heroes of men and women is worth all the so-called truths in the

world if they serve no better end than to make us cowards. These men and women died with God in their hearts, and human nature never rises to such a pitch of heroism unless it has that kind of faith. The divine in humanity is developed by faith rather than by intellectual attainment. The most important part of a man is his soul, and if that stands plumb nothing can go crooked.

I believe that we all should have what the martyrs had—not a conventional, but a real trust in the Almighty, a trust like that which the sea-captain has in his compass. It may not be easy to attain, but we ought to be satisfied with nothing less. Without it we drift, but with it we weather all storms and are headed for heaven.

You need it in all the emergencies of life, and there are many which try the soul to its utmost. It is not easy to live well, to resignedly put your shoulders to a heavy burden, to meet temptation squarely and thrust it from your path, to bury a dear one and feel that the best thing has happened for all concerned. Easy? Is there any task that will compare with it? Do you not know that it is harder to acquire an athletic soul than an athletic body? Because it is harder you need to take

certain simple religious truths and feed on them until they are thoroughly assimilated with your spirit. If God is taken from the realm of myths and made a downright fact, if heaven is not up in the clouds, but all around you, if love never dies, and cannot be destroyed by death or changed in any manner, and if these glorious revelations are not guesses, but certainties, what is your life but a school, in which angels are teachers, and what is this old earth but a spiral staircase leading to eternity? If religion is good for anything it is good for everything, and no man is at his best until spiritual truth is just as practical and practicable as any fact in physics. After that all will go well, but not before.

YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE.

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. vii. 21.

WHAT is the chief object to be sought for in this life? What one thing stands preëminent above all others as the thing to be attained at all costs and hazards?

Is it wealth? Then there is a radical weakness in the structure of the world, for not all can possess it—an element of unfairness which throws discredit on the Creator. The Christian religion must be based on an illusion; for it teaches us that God is equally the Father of all His children, and the fatherhood which robs some in order to enrich others may serve such gods as dwelt on Olympus, the creatures of caprice, but cannot be an attribute of a being all-wise and all-powerful.

Besides, a little observation shows that there is

much more happiness in the work of acquiring wealth than its mere possession can bestow. Money does not always enlarge a man; on the contrary, it frequently belittles him. It has more than once happened that as a man grew rich he grew small. The large-hearted boy who is so eager in the pursuit of money that he can see nothing else worth toiling for often becomes a narrow-hearted man.

Indeed, it is a trite truth that a great fortune is a dangerous inheritance. A pair of willing hands with poverty prophesy a better future for youth than a pair of hands with nothing to do and a fountain from which dollars can be dipped in exhaustless abundance. God never bestows a greater blessing than when He gives one an environment which puts him on his mettle and makes it impossible for him to have what he wants until he has earned it.

Out of hardness and stern necessity, out of pain and suffering, out of frequent disappointment, comes the best thing the human mind can aspire to—a perfect character. Your reputation is what men suppose you to be; your character is what you are; and to possess those hardy, rugged elements of endurance and virtue which mark God's

noblemen is to be fitted for earth and to be ready for heaven.

That character is not an inheritance, it is an achievement. It would be cheap if purchased at the price of Golconda, but no Golconda can buy it. It is a growth, the slow development of years, but it is worth more to him who has it than anything this side of the stars, and worth more to the world as an inspiration and an incentive than all the other elements of civilization in splendid aggregation. Society receives no diviner heritage than that of a man who, when called to heaven, leaves for our benefit an example which stirs the heart of youth to imitation.

And in this great democracy of God every man may have character. He has so arranged the moral universe that, while wealth and fame and genius may be denied, the most sterling qualities of character are always granted to those who are willing to go through fire that they may come out pure gold. Character is within reach of all, the goal of the poor and the rich alike. No matter what your circumstances may be, whether you are born to a humble or a proud position, whether you work with hands or with brains, you can have a

noble character if you are ready to pay God's price; but without that payment you can have it neither here nor hereafter.

Character, like everything else that is worth having, is dependent on conditions. The sculptor takes the marble in the rough, and it is only by ten thousand times ten thousand blows that it takes the shape of the dream he has dreamed. No matter how great his genius, he must patiently use the chisel and the mallet, keeping ever before him the perfect statue that is to be, or the marble will remain as uncouth as when it was quarried. The dream, the chisel, and the mallet!

So it is in a man's spiritual experience. Patient work with a holy aspiration behind it, these are the materials out of which saints and heroes are made. The man who whimpers and complains of ill luck comes to naught. The man who is worthy of our praise is he who takes any fortune and hammers it into shape; he does not ask for good luck, but for the strength to make good luck out of bad.

Moreover, there is no perfect character without religious faith, because faith is the mother of incentive. If one is to fall asleep to-morrow and

wake nevermore, it makes little difference what he does to-day ; but if he is to live forever, and what he does to-day will result in good or ill to-morrow, he has a motive for self-control which, like the steam in the boiler, sets the whole machinery a-going and keeps it a-going.

There are two prime duties—to believe in God as the best friend you can have, who will help you to achieve the best of which you are capable, and to believe in yourself as able, with that help, to fashion a godlike character out of the varying fortune which falls to our human lot.

It is worth while to live honestly if we have a heaven to look forward to ; and certain it is—as certain as that night follows day—that our condition hereafter will be decided, not by our professions, nor yet by our creed, but by that combination of qualities which are summed up in the one awful but also glorious word—character.

THIS LONGING FOR IMMORTALITY.

“ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven.”—Acts i. 10.

WE did not come into the world of our own accord, and are therefore not responsible for being here.

It is evident, however, that we are here for a purpose, and it is perfectly clear what that purpose is.

When we arrive it is with a perfectly helpless body. For a time we must be taken care of, our necessities supplied by some person or persons who have been appointed to that end. After a few years we obtain possession of ourselves and begin to think and act on our own judgment.

The body goes through the mysterious processes of growth and continues to develop until it reaches a certain stature; then the growth ceases, and by slow degrees the body declines in strength until at last we enter the stage of childhood a second time.

The law is that the body shall increase until it reaches its maximum of energy. It is safe, therefore, to generalize and say that everything has a purpose ahead of it, and ought to have such an environment that this purpose can be reached, provided the laws which govern it are obeyed. That statement proves itself and is not subject to denial.

The mind and the soul, like the body, are merely dormant possibilities at birth. They know nothing and have experienced nothing. Knowledge and experience come little by little, and in that way mind and soul commence to develop.

Now, if it be true that the body grows to its full height and strength by what it feeds on, we ought to say without fear of contradiction that there is also an ideal perfection for mind and soul to reach, and that in some way and somewhere the opportunity will be offered to attain that ideal. It would be strange to declare that one part of us can come to its maturity, but the other part never will, for it is plainly true that no human soul has ever yet reached that point where there was nothing more or better that it could do or become.

We have, then, this curious anomaly, namely,

that, so far as this present life is concerned,—counting a man as consisting of body, soul, and spirit,—one third of us is accorded fair play for itself with a generous hand, while two thirds of us, and altogether the best part of us, are denied the chance to attain their legitimate end.

The idea of immortality, therefore, originates in the very necessity of the case, and we rightly argue that if God is just He will give us hereafter the opportunity which not even He can furnish us within the narrow limits of earthly life. We may reverently assert that no soul ever can, under any conceivable circumstances, achieve in these seventy years a moral perfection which corresponds with the physical perfection which the body easily attains. There is something wanting to the soul, then, and that something is an extended opportunity, which can only result from an extended existence.

The fact is everywhere patent that the spiritual part of man has hardly more than waked up when Death drops the curtain. The first act has been put on the stage and is being played well or badly, as the case may be. We see at a glance that there is a plot, and we become interested in it. That

first act suggests the second and the third, and so on to the end. The characters are all there, the dramatic material for a tragedy or a comedy is abundant, and when the curtain falls on that mere prologue, we have a right to expect—why not the right to demand?—that the play shall continue until the plot has been fully developed and the purpose which the author had in view has been attained.

Now we have a large number of great men in the world, who rise like pyramids from a level plain; but the greatest of them all is conscious of inexhaustible resources, and feels capable of doing grander things than any yet achieved. That is a very startling fact. No man ever got to the end of himself, for somehow a great deed simply opens the door to other deeds still greater.

But there is another fact which is painfully pathetic, namely, that there are hosts of men in every rank of life who are striving hard to make both ends meet and who have the undeveloped capacity for greatness. Give them the opportunities of education and environment, and they will attain an eminence now beyond the reach of their vision. The earth is full of undeveloped greatness—greatness suppressed by circumstance.

Therefore there will be a second and a third act to this drama; another life will furnish what has for a time been refused. The purpose wrought into the soul by its Creator will be attained hereafter. Death is only the servant who opens the door when Providence rings the bell, and ushers you into the larger building, where you will have the chance to become a larger man.

Amid the drudgery and hardship of life keep that truth in mind and it will clear the fogs away and leave you in sunshine. We are on the road home, and the way is sometimes dark and dreary, but when we get there we shall see that every experience of earth was intended to fit us for the higher joys of heaven.

THE WICKED TONGUE.

“And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.”—Mic. vi. 12.

THE one thing to be guarded most carefully is the tongue. Deceitful tongues have done more harm than all the wars that were ever waged. Cities have been ravaged by the sword, but reputations are ravaged by the tongue. As a weapon of revenge, slander and gossip are surer than poison. They are more cunning than the subtlest drug, and more effective; for while the one produces death, which is a matter of very little consequence, the others result in despoiling a life, which is a matter of infinite moment.

There are two crimes which stand side by side at the head of the list—to speak evil of your neighbor, and to listen to it. The listening ear and the slanderous tongue are the two organs of the human body upon which the devil chiefly depends for the accomplishment of his purposes. If you

will give him your ear and let him find the tongue to fill it, heaven will grow sad and the pit will rejoice.

One of the highest virtues the heart can cherish is the virtue of a dull ear when slander croaks. Slander is never backed by a good motive; it is only a base heart that can say base things. The homes are countless that have been wrecked by loose talk which had no more foundation than "the baseless fabric of this vision," and he who deals in it does what not enriches him, but makes some one else poor indeed. As a general thing, when one slyly distils an evil rumor in your ear, it is because he hopes it is true. If the rule of Christ were followed, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone," slander would slink away and hide itself, as did the accusers of the magdalen in the olden time.

How precious may a few words be if rightly and opportunely spoken, if they take the form of encouragement, if they have a warm and generous impulse behind them! What miracles they may work in one's life! "I have dreamed a dream!" cries the hopeful youth, as he faces the future. Some one hears him and replies, "I made my dream

come true, and you can do the same." How changed that future is, and what fresh inspirations are added to that soul just getting a glance at the reality of things! "Nay, nay," says the saintly matron to the young girl who is about to step aside from the path of virtue; "this is God's world, and we must do God's will at any cost to ourselves." Hesitation becomes fixed resolve, and to the ninety and nine is added one more to make the hundred complete.

Now, opposite the sweetest lies the bitterest, and opposite the best lies the worst. What can the mind conceive more unworthy of an immortal soul than a phrase so framed that it bears discouragement to him who hears it? A sentence that contains an innuendo may cause more evil than can be measured. If a man is trying to get out of the pit, such a sentence is like a heavy hand placed on his shoulder, pushing him back. To spread a rumor of evil concerning any one, and especially concerning any woman, is to do an act at which the angels weep and on which the very heavens frown. It is hard enough to do right under the best of circumstances, and he who adds to the difficulty may perchance make it thereby

impossible to do right and so seal the doom of a struggling fellow-creature. Words are sometimes as light as thistledown in the wind, but at other times they are as heavy as lead or they may even crush like an avalanche.

I say, therefore, that nothing in your possession should be so carefully watched as your lips. Do and say all you can to cheer, for God only knows the secrets of our lives, how much we need to hear such words, and how much influence they may exert. But never, never, never, under any provocation, allow yourself to strengthen a rumor of scandal. If there is wrong in any soul, it will produce its own results, for the laws of the universe are inexorable; but if the wrong is not there, and by any word from your mouth you give the impression that it is there, you judge as you would not like to be judged, and you would think it a great calamity if a like measure were meted out to you.

We should be helpful, not hurtful, to one another. It is one of the primary demands of the Christian religion that we shall love our neighbor; and where love is there is always pity for the falling, but never a word that shall make it easy for them to

slip farther down. Open your mouth to say all the good you can of every one, but seal your mouth against the utterance of a sarcasm or a suspicion. Let it not be said in that future when we shall see face to face instead of through a glass, darkly, that you pressed any soul back by an ungenerous utterance; for words are things, words are piercing swords, words are blizzards that tear trees up by the roots, words are lightning-bolts that strike sometimes to kill.

If you can say nothing good, say nothing at all. Remember the legend of the stranger who stood unknown in the crowd that was curiously gazing at a dead dog. The poor creature had many blemishes, and they were all enumerated by the lookers-on, but one mild voice was heard saying, "He had beautifully white teeth." They turned in surprise, and a woman whispered, "It must be the Christ, for He alone could say anything good of a dead dog." The example is worth following.

And how much better the world would be if, in lieu of speaking evil, we should either utter words of praise and encouragement or maintain a charitable silence!

A WONDROUS TRUTH.

“And Jesus, immediately knowing . . . that virtue had gone out of Him, turned, . . . and said, Who touched My clothes?”
—Mark v. 30.

THIS little incident contains the clue to a whole system of spiritual philosophy. For many centuries we have recognized its pathos without perceiving the truth that lay behind it. The time has come, however, in the world's enlarged experience and widening knowledge, when we have taken another look, and found with glad surprise a revelation of heretofore unknown possibilities.

Not all that Christ said two thousand years ago is yet understood; there are summits still covered with mist; and it is more than probable that scores of generations must pass before we can make practical use of many truths which are literally buried in the Scriptures awaiting resurrection. The lightning has always been in the clouds, but until the

race had reached a certain intellectual strength the discovery was impossible. You may state the principles of algebra to a child, but he does not apprehend them until he becomes a man. In the Bible more is concealed than is revealed, but little by little, as we grow toward maturity, we open new windows and get new views.

Look at the text once more. A sick woman pressed through the crowd, knelt on the ground, touched His garment, and was healed. It was a miracle? Names count for nothing, but in God's world everything is orderly. In that incident no law was broken, but a new law was announced. To produce results in accordance with higher laws than those generally known is apparently to work miracles. Christ's ways were simply God's ways, and therefore in our ignorance we find it difficult to explain Him.

But stranger than the cure is the fact that He immediately knew that "virtue had gone out of Him." Then He suffered actual loss of something and was conscious of the loss, and that something was of such a nature that it wrought a physical change in its recipient.

Two great laws are laid bare, and we must needs

tremble in their presence, for they are far-reaching in their possible influence. If we ponder them they will make for us a new heaven and a new earth.

In the first place, if the woman's attitude had been one of doubt instead of faith, her disease would not have been affected by contact. We are now treading on very sacred ground, and the truth is made clear that when you and God are in close relations the storm ceases and there is calm. The woman believed, trusted, yearned for help, and that frame of mind is the basis, the only basis, of true religion. There were others in that crowd who must have touched Him also, either because of the press or from curiosity, but nothing unusual occurred. And the reason why they too were not healed is that God never goes through the closed door of a heart. If you open the door and stand on the threshold to welcome the guest, He comes. If you turn your face toward the west, then for you there is no sunrise; but if you face the east and wait, the morning will break on your troubled life.

In the second place, if—and I say it reverently—if Christ had been self-seeking or worldly, no

virtue would have gone out of Him. Selfishness is miserly. It would have clutched the wondrous possession and kept it within narrow limits for narrow purposes. The willingness of Christ to give, because He loves with infinite compassion, and the anxiety of man to receive—there, and there only, can be found material out of which to construct a world-saving religion. Heaven reaching down and man reaching up—then come the union and the communion, which work miracles. What are your cold and chilling statements of truths that are merely secondary, which you gather together and call a creed, what are they when compared with these two glowing facts? A creed is truth frozen into glittering icicles, but Christ's words are a blazing fire on the wintry hearthstone, which gives new life to the benumbed traveler who knocks at the door and asks for shelter.

But a third fact must not be neglected. Christ's love and sympathy created that something which is called "virtue," and which He could impart as a remedy for physical and spiritual ills. If we too become pure in heart and walk in company with "unseen beings," shall not we too have a moiety of the same "virtue," and cannot we in our smaller

way bless the world? What a vista opens before us! If we could get free from the bondage of passion, could feel that nothing is of value except the beautiful, the true, and the good, could literally dwell among heavenly thoughts, do what is right simply because it is right, and regard this life as a few lines of preface to the life eternal, then our broken-heartedness and our despondency would take their flight and leave us gentle pilgrims to the far-away shore. And the poor and sorrowing and bereaved who came in touch with our quiet lives would receive of the "virtue" which makes one strong and glad. Religion, rightly understood, is the staff on which we lean as we climb toward the stars.

LIVING IN GOD.

“ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”—Acts xvii. 28.

THERE is an old apothegm which runs, “ Never sit in the shadow if it is possible to sit in the sunshine.” If we can apply this advice to our religion we shall find happiness in many an unexpected place, and the corduroy road of many an experience will be changed to a smoother highway.

It is easy to make life hard by simply imagining that it is hard to make it easy. In doing so, however, we run against the grain of eternal verity, for the mission of all spiritual law is to make us strong and cheerful.

Heaven is distressed by the fact that earth turns its back on God, then declares that it cannot see Him, and thereupon seriously raises the question whether He is there or not. One may as well be blind as to look the wrong way.

The Scriptures are a trumpet-blast proclaiming

that God can always be found when you need Him enough to take the trouble to look for Him. We may truly liken them to a giant's hand outstretched from the heavens to assist us over the rough places of life.

The religion that the heart craves, the religion which is to the soul what oxygen is to the lungs, cannot be crystallized into a creed any more than a disembodied spirit can be caught and caged. It disdains such narrow limitations. Mere phrases cannot express its beauty. The child who can put its love for its mother into logical terms does not love her as he should; but when their arms are about each other and their silent lips meet, then they both understand what love means. In like manner, when God and you meet and you become conscious of the divine presence, words are useless, if not impossible. He alone knows what true religion is who cannot tell you what it is, because language fails to reach its depths.

To live and move and have our being in Him—these are the esoteric elements of Christianity. As the fish lives and moves and has its being in the water, is nourished and upborne by it, is surrounded by it, is penetrated by it in all its parts,

and would gasp and die if lifted above the surface, so may a man live in God and be conscious that God lives in him. The fatal ability to shut God out from the soul, the exercise of which constitutes practical infidelity,—the only kind of infidelity that is worth a moment's attention,—is the source of all the ills from which we suffer. If you board up your windows it is useless to complain of the lack of ventilation. The difficulty is not with the fresh air, which is abundant and health-giving, but with you.

If a young man falls into evil ways, he need not wonder if he reaps disease long before the autumn comes. The law of the universe would be his friend, but he has made it his enemy. Indeed, he has practically declared that he can either repeal or defy that law, but all the while the law is making him a new illustration of the fact that it can be neither repealed nor defied. He succumbs on a field whereon no man has ever yet been victor. It is not safe to shake the fist in challenge to omnipotence; the battle is unequal. Never put yourself, like a kernel of corn, between the upper and lower millstones, for only one result is possible. Vice never has made and never will make music

for the soul, simply because God has made the soul too large and noble to be satisfied with anything short of virtue. When you live outside the line of God's purpose, the fish is on the land instead of in its proper element, and it suffers; put it back into the water, and the memory of the past is lost in gratitude for the present.

Literally you may live in God, and a life of veritable miracle it will be. These human hearts may be filled with God as the sponge in the depths of ocean is filled with water. If you can be passive in His hands, if you can lift the curtains in your spiritual house and let the sunshine of His presence fill the rooms, if you can love and trust as the Christ did, what a wonder-world this will become! And it is possible; for did not the Master say, "Greater things than these shall ye do"? We have not yet learned what religion is or what it can do for a man. We have looked at it from afar, our eyes dimmed by strange prejudices and misconceptions, but when our feet actually press its sacred soil, and, looking up, we can see the "cloud of witnesses," then life will be a mountain-path that leads to the summit and thence to the eternal Beyond.

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